





# ***Dante's Poem of Light***

***Conversing with Dante  
in Dream {1}***

**Art Aeon**

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Dante in Dream {1}* (2019)

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*Dante's Poem of Light* (2019)\*  
*Journey of Life on Earth* (2019)\*  
*Mystery of the Universe* (2019)\*

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# ***Conversing with Dante in Dream***

A Dreamer's Tale One:

## ***Dante's Poem of Light***

Tale Two:

## ***Journey of Life on Earth***

Tale Three:

## ***Mystery of the Universe***

**Dedicated to**

**Dante Alighieri** (1265-1321)

You have inspired me to dream of  
this inner journey into the realm of imaginations.

May Dante-pilgrim be my wise guide;

May Dante-poet sing deep in me.

***Dante's Poem of Light:  
Conversing with Dante in Dream {1}***

Song 1: *Dante and a Dreamer*

Song 2: *Conception of the Divine Comedy*

Song 3: *Poetic Transfiguration*

Song 4: *The Aeneid of Vergil: Book Six*

Song 5: *On the Nature of Things by Lucretius*

Song 6: *The Myth of Er in The Republic of Plato*

Song 7: *The Epic of Astral Messenger Er-Dante*

Song 8: *Enigma of the Limbo*

Song 9: *Invention of Religions by Theocracies*

Song 10: *Beholding God as a Simple Light*

Song 11: *With Beatrice in the Paradise*

Song 12: *Farewell between Beatrice and Dante*



## Prologue

### ***Dante's Poem of Light: Conversing with Dante in Dream {1}***

This work is the beginning part of a fictional narrative poem in the tercet stanza. It unfolds an imaginary conversation between two characters in a dream: a sincere heathen dreamer and the spirit of his revered poet, Dante (1265- 1321), the author of *The Divine Comedy*.

*The Divine Comedy* of Dante inspired the present work to follow its form and substance as much as possible by a novice. The dreamer's Tale One consists of twelve episodes, each called *Song* (similar to Dante's *Canto*).

#### **Song 1: *Dante and a Dreamer***

The dreamer comes across his revered poet, Dante, who whispers to himself the beginning verses ("*Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita...*") of the Canto One of *Inferno* of the *Divine Comedy*. The elated dreamer exalts his revered

poet; he confesses that the *Divine Comedy* moved him to set out an ethereal, spiritual journey beyond his horizon. He entreats Dante to guide him to comprehend the abstruse and sublime *Divine Comedy*. After questioning the strange dreamer, Dante decides to converse with him about his *Divine Comedy*.

### **Song 2: *Conception of the Divine Comedy***

The dreamer asks Dante how he happened to conceive his immortal brainchild: *The Divine Comedy*. If it was the love of Beatrice that impregnated him to bring forth its birth through his spiritual gestation, then whether Beatrice was a real person in his life, or she was a fictional, idealized idol, adored by Dante in his beautiful imaginations. Dante tells the dreamer that Beatrice was a real, beauteous and gracious young lady whose love inspired him to write *The Divine Comedy*. In this episode, Dante's narration was based on the book of poetry: "*La Vita Nuova*" by Dante.

### **Song 3: *Poetic Transfiguration***

Deeply moved by Dante's revelation of his love of Beatrice, the dreamer exclaims that there must be three persons in Dante: *Dante-lover* who loved Beatrice; *Dante-pilgrim* who endured the pilgrimage

through the Hell, the Purgatory, and the Paradise. *Dante-poet* achieved the miraculous poetic transfiguration of the private love-story of *Dante-lover* into soul-searching, cosmic and spiritual pilgrimage of *Dante-pilgrim*. It was set off into motion by the love of Beatrice. Hence, she was exalted in a grand, sublime poem: *The Divine Comedy*.

#### **Song 4: *The Aeneid of Vergil: Book Six***

When the dreamer asks Dante how he attained such a sublime art of poetry, Dante replies that the great Roman poet Vergil (70-19 BCE) has been his spiritual father who inspired him to sail across the deep, vast sea of poetry, transcending the gulf of thirteen centuries. The great epic poem, *The Aeneid* of Vergil, was the model that guided him in writing his *Divine Comedy*. To provide concrete examples for the dreamer to study, Dante relates the gist of Book Six of *The Aeneid* of Vergil.

#### **Song 5: *On the Nature of Things by Lucretius***

The dreamer remarks that Vergil seemed to allude in Book Six of *The Aeneid* that each thing comes to exist by its intrinsic cause—‘*Spirit*,’ moved by ‘*fiery energy*’ as its ‘*own generative seed*,’ without an external creator such as God in the beginning of the world. Dante says that Vergil might have been influenced by the naturalistic philosophical poem, *On the Nature of Things* by Lucretius as he exalted Lucretius: “*Happy is*

*he who has discovered the causes of things, and has cast beneath his feet all fears, the unavoidable fate and the din of devouring Netherworld of the dead.”* Dante asks the dreamer his opinion about Lucretius’s poem. He affirms that Lucretius tried to explain that all changes in things occur according to the universal and eternal physical principles of nature, not by whims of human-like gods; Lucretius challenged valiantly against awful superstitions and terrible bigotry of misleading deities in his poem.

#### **Song 6: *The Myth of Er in the Republic of Plato***

To counter the Epicurean argument that ‘*soul*’ perishes with ‘*body*’ after death, Dante discusses with the dreamer *The Myth of Er*, written by Plato in the Book Ten of his monumental philosophical dialogue: *The Republic*. The story is about a fictional character named *Er*, who was a hero slain in a battle. As his dead body was lying on the funeral pile, miraculously, *Er* revived back to life. He reported what he had experienced in the realm of the dead to his friends alive in this world because *Er* was selected to be a messenger who should inform the fate of various souls after death to the living people.

When Dante asks the dreamer what he thinks about Plato's abstruse philosophical myth, the dreamer confesses that he cannot comprehend Plato's enigmatic imaginations of the mysterious '*Spindle of Necessity*,' weaved by the three *Goddesses of Fates*. But he feels a profound similarity between Plato's character *Er* and the character *Dante-pilgrim* of *The Divine Comedy* because he thinks that both *Er* and *Dante-pilgrim* are unusual messengers. They report their miraculous experiences of their astral adventures.

#### **Song 7: *The Epic of Astral Messenger Er-Dante***

In light of Plato's *Myth of Er*, the dreamer tries to make a witty paraphrasing of Dante's *Divine Comedy* as *The Epic of Astral Messenger Er-Dante*. With magnanimity, Dante accepts the dreamer's paraphrasing of his *Commedia*'s protagonist-pilgrim as the astral messenger: *Er-Dante*. Poet-Dante confides to the dreamer how much he has suffered, endured, and overcome formidable difficulties in constructing the imaginative physical and ethical architectures of the Hell, the Purgatory, and the Paradise in his *Divine Comedy*. The dreamer exalts that *The Divine Comedy* is the sublime poem that shines spiritual lights purging our hearts. Dante says that he regrets to find his serious mistakes such as allotting Virgil, Homer, and other virtuous ancient sages to be hopelessly suspended in the *Limbo* of Hell.

### **Song 8: *Enigma of the Limbo***

The heathen dreamer confesses that the episode of *Limbo* is perplexing and enigmatic to him. Dante admits that he was too cowardly to overcome the Christian Church's strict dogma of the baptism as the absolute requirement for salvation. They discuss the proper abodes of the virtuous pagan sages.

### **Song 9: *Invention of Diverse State-Religions* by Various Theocracies**

Dante and the heathen dreamer discuss the nature of religion. They agree that diverse peoples in various cultures have worshipped very different deities and that the radical differences in their faiths have been awful causes or excuses for cruel religious wars in our history. They discuss whether religion is the divine revelation of the immortal deity or a mere temporary invention by mortal humans as a useful social device to survive and win in severe competitions with other human societies. The dreamer mentions to Dante that the ancient Greek naturalistic philosopher, Xenophanes (c. 570-c. 475 BCE), criticized Homer and Hesiod for their misrepresentations of the Greek deities as if they were human-like, vile, ungodly, and immoral characters in their poems. Xenophanes suggested that the deity should be regarded as impersonal, abstract, and mysterious 'ONE' that has nothing to do with human affairs at all.

### **Song 10: *Beholding God as a Simple Light***

Dante exclaims that it just dawns to him that the Xenophanes's word '*GOD/ONE*' must be regarded as a device used to point to the ineffable ultimate like we use our finger to indicate to the light of a distant star for someone to look into. The dreamer concurs with Dante and exults that it reminds him of the sublime final Canto of *Paradiso*: How miraculously the poet-Dante blesses the pilgrim-Dante to behold God directly in person as a 'Simple Light': '*GOD/ONE.*' The dreamer entreats his revered poet to recite for him such an exalting poetic transfiguration so that he may behold Dante's breathtaking artistic apotheosis. Deeply moved, Dante recites the concluding final verses of *The Divine Comedy*.

### **Song 11: *With Beatrice in the Paradise***

The elated dreamer implores his revered poet to keep singing a moving farewell between Dante-pilgrim and his beloved Beatrice: How the pilgrim had to depart from Paradise to fulfil his mission as the messenger *Er-Dante* who came back to relate his numinous pilgrimage to living peoples on the Earth. Dante confides to the dreamer his private affectionate matters which he has left unsung in the *Divine Comedy*: From her blessed seat, Beatrice noticed that

Dante-pilgrim was collapsing after he had directly beheld the divine light. In shock, she rushed to the fallen pilgrim. She prayed to the Virgin Mother for help. Saint Mary came down and convinced Beatrice that the pilgrim was not dead but in a deep trance after beholding the Divine Light in person, too overwhelming for any man to experience such a brilliance. Dante should return to the Earth and fulfil his sacred mission to sing what he had seen through his numinous pilgrimage through the Hell, the Purgatory and the Paradise into divine poems, overcoming dire woes and throes of agonies in the world of man. In time, Dante-pilgrim awoke from his deep trance. Beatrice and Dante-pilgrim exulted their affectionate privacy. The pilgrim related to her the numinous experience of beholding the divine light in person.

**Song 12: *Farewell between Beatrice and Dante***

Saint Augustine announced that it was time for Dante-pilgrim to return to the Earth to write down what he had witnessed in his numinous pilgrimage into sacred poems. He would guide him for his safe return. Dante-pilgrim implored him to visit Virgil in the Limbo on the way back home. Saint Augustine accepted his plea with great enthusiasm. Dante-pilgrim vowed to Beatrice that he would devote all his life to singing her sacred sublime love in an honest poem.



Beatrice beseeched her beloved poet to write a sublime poem that would exalt the human nature and bless people with pure love; she pleads him to write it in her native tongue—plain sweet Italian, not in Latin nor Greek, so that she could sing it. Here ends Dante's sublime love-story.

From their conversations, Dante gathers that the dreamer has been striving to write something of vital importance on nature into a poem. The dreamer confesses that he wishes to write a poem on the nature of life, following Dante's artistry of *La Commedia* rather than the didactic style of *De Rerum Natura* of Lucretius. He entreats Dante to help him fulfil his eager wish.

*The dreamer's Tale Two* will follow in:  
***Journey of Life on Earth: Conversing with Dante in Dream {2}***.

## **Song 1**

*Dante and a Dreamer*

**Song 1: Dante and a Dreamer**

*In the ripe autumn of  
his journey of life, an old man  
muses on the profound mystery of his fleeting  
existence in this world.* 1-3

*He rereads The Divine Comedy  
of Dante to breathe in vital inspirations  
how to tell what he feels  
and thinks about his experiences of life.* 1-6

*The mysterious sublime poem enthrals him.* 1-9

*He falls asleep and wanders  
in a wondrous dream. A mystic voice  
gently pervades his humble searching heart:* 1-12

‘Amid the journey of our life  
I realized that I had strayed in dark woods;  
The right way had vanished from me. 1-15

**Song 1: *Dante and a Dreamer***

Ah, how awful it was  
forlorn in the dismal wild woods!  
Thinking of it brings me back throes of fears. 1-18

So dreadful it was, worse  
than death. But there I came upon  
wondrous things that I will try to relate. 1-21

O memory, help me!  
What I had seen there was inscribed  
in your book; now show me your mysterious 1-24  
power to recall them  
in concrete cogent human speech!’

*A numinous figure looms in splendour, 1-27*  
*as if he has descended*  
*from an ethereal mystic realm.*

*Elated in awe and thrill, the dreamer exalts 1-30*

Song 1: *Dante and a Dreamer*

*his revered poet:*

‘O, Dante! I hear your wise voice  
resounding in me. You are the poet 1-33  
who deeply inspired me  
to set out on this wondrous journey  
into the mystic inner realm. Please help me 1-36  
learn your sublime art  
of poetry.’ ‘Who are you? Wherefore  
have you come to this dark woods, astray from 1-39  
the common path of our life?’  
*asks the sage.* ‘I’m a humble heathen  
who admires your poems at heart. It was 1-42  
your *Divine Comedy* that  
moved me to set out this mystic  
spiritual journey beyond my horizon. 1-45

**Song 1: Dante and a Dreamer**

Please help me pursue it  
to see the light,' *says the dreamer.*

'Tell me what you had read in my *Commedia* 1-48  
that moved you to sail out  
to the vast deep sea of poetry,'  
*says the numinous sage. His keen question* 1-51  
*makes the dreamer speechless.*

*Trembling in sheer awe, he confesses*  
*honestly: 'I cannot say what I have grasped* 1-54  
*from your abstruse poem.*

The scope of your *Commedia* is  
too vast; its theology is too cryptic 1-57  
for me to comprehend.

Yet somehow, the ineffable  
sublimity of your poem enthrals me. 1-60

Song 1: *Dante and a Dreamer*

Its exquisite poetic form  
shines the pure, noble beauty  
of lucid, abstract, geometric perfection.’ 1-63

‘If you merely glance at  
the outer fringes of my *Commedia*,’  
*says Dante in a resolute voice*, ‘I advise 1-66

that you don’t put out to sea  
your little boat. Turn back to your home  
shore while yet you may, lest you lose your own 1-69  
bearings in this life.

Unless one has lived on the sacred  
divine knowledge, he cannot sail safely 1-72  
across the deep holy sea,

blessed by divine grace and revelation.’  
*With courage and passion, the dreamer pleads:* 1-75

Song 1: *Dante and a Dreamer*

‘I’m a worthless heathen  
who does not know what divine *grace*  
or *revelation* may be. Nonetheless, I wish 1-78  
to adventure into  
the mystic realm of your imaginations.  
Please guide me to enter into your *Inferno* 1-81  
to see the dark awesome  
world of the dead and share with them  
acute throes and dire miseries of our fates; 1-84  
May I learn from the dead  
the meaning of our life. Please lead me  
to climb up your *Purgatorio* to look into 1-87  
the nobility of human  
conscience; how we should purge our heart  
from sins of pride, greed, and lust to live in good 1-90



**Song 1: *Dante and a Dreamer***

harmony. Please uplift me  
to rise to your lofty *Paradiso*  
to see the ultimate source of all beings. 1-93

The brilliance of your insight  
overwhelms my poor sight; I become  
blind, yet I feel sacred lights pervading deep 1-96

my meek mind.’ ‘You seem to  
be a strange earnest dreamer, who  
wanders freely in your deep imaginations. 1-99

Your sincerity and ardent  
eagerness move me to encourage  
you to pursue what you dream of. Tell me 1-102

who you are and how I  
may help you achieve what you hope,’  
*says Dante with gracious magnanimity.* 1-105

**Song 1: *Dante and a Dreamer***

‘I’m a lowly heathen,  
born in the Far East. I was brought up  
in the oriental culture. I studied sciences 1-108  
and mathematics to learn  
the nature of things and the basic  
principles of nature. Midway hard struggles 1-111  
for survival in this life,  
I realized myself helplessly lost  
in the enigmatic drama of our life: 1-114  
Who are we? How have we  
come here by chance, and to where  
are we fleeing away? The beginning verses 1-117  
of your *Divine Comedy*  
impinged deep on my heart, as if  
I was crying out those soul-searching words 1-120

Song 1: *Dante and a Dreamer*

to myself, which you wrote  
for the whole humanity,' *says the man,*  
*trembling in awe and modest excitements.* 1-123

'Do you wish to write about  
what you dream of yourself?' *asks Dante.*

'No. I wish to sing of the profound mystery 1-126  
of nature and its sublime  
beauty before I fade, in due time,  
back to the oblivion,' *says the dreamer.* 1-129

'It is a hard task to  
write such a poem on nature.  
It must come deep from one's soul by genuine 1-132  
necessity and enthusiasm.

Moreover, it is quite challenging  
to write plain facts and profound truths into 1-135

**Song 1: *Dante and a Dreamer***

a moving poem,' says  
*Dante, with a knowing empathy.*  
'It must be a task beyond my lot and wit. 1-138  
Yet, I have been striving  
to write something on the nature  
of life, inspired by your *Divine Comedy*,' 1-141  
*confesses the meek dreamer.*  
'I don't understand how my poem  
maybe relevant to what you dream of,' 1-144  
*says Dante in wonder.*  
'I feel your deep love of nature,  
Dante, especially of stars as you have 1-147  
concluded your *Divine Comedy*:  
*"The love that moves the sun and*  
*the other stars."* 'Yes, I love stars; they always 1-150

Song 1: *Dante and a Dreamer*

inspire me to imagine  
something mysterious beyond  
this mundane world. You are a strange dreamer 1-153  
who appears to have come  
from a future era, unknown to me.  
Tell me how you happened to wander into 1-156  
the mysterious dark woods,’  
*says Dante with genuine perplexity.*  
‘I do not know it, Dante. This seems to me 1-159  
a miraculous dream  
which I could have never dreamed of.  
Since you completed your sublime *Commedia*, 1-162  
seven centuries have passed  
to reach my present era. Yet, I wish  
to remind you, Dante, that you are the very 1-165

Song 1: *Dante and a Dreamer*

creator of such poetic  
miracles in transcending time,’  
*says the dreamer in heartfelt elation.* 1-168

‘Why do you attribute  
to me such a poetic transcendence?’  
*asks Dante.* ‘In your *Commedia*, the Dante- 1-171

poet makes the character  
Dante-pilgrim to converse with  
the character Virgil; he guides the pilgrim 1-174

through the numinous journey,  
transcending the chasm of thirteen  
centuries via your sublime poetic miracle!’ 1-177

*says the dreamer in thrills.*  
‘I see your point, my keen dreamer,’  
*says Dante, beaming subtle smiles. The great* 1-180

**Song 1: Dante and a Dreamer**

*poet and the heathen*  
*dreamer sit down to converse at ease*  
*in the awe-inspiring primordial dark woods.* 1-183  
*They unfold their profound*  
*and meaningful dialogues in their lucky*  
*coming across by chance in a wondrous dream.* 1-186

## **Song 2**

*Conception of the Divine Comedy*



*Song 2: Conception of the Divine Comedy*

‘Please reveal to me, Dante,  
how you’ve conceived your immortal  
brainchild: *The Divine Comedy*. Was it the love 2-3  
of Beatrice that impregnated  
you to bring forth its birth through  
your devoted spiritual gestation? I wonder 2-6  
whether Beatrice was a real  
person in your life, or she was  
an idealized fictional idol, adored by 2-9  
you in pure imaginations,’  
*says the dreamer with curiosity.*  
*Beaming gentle, subtle smiles, Dante speaks:* 2-12  
‘In the cherished private  
book of my memory, I read what  
gracious and beauteous Beatrice has inscribed: 2-15

*Song 2: Conception of the Divine Comedy*

*“Here begins the new life.”*

She inspired into my heart the new	
life of love; her breathtaking beauty, true	2-18
modesty, and noble grace	
began to govern my new life	
as the angelic giver of blessing	2-21
since I met her for the first time	
in our friendly neighbourhood	
of the great flourishing city of Florence.	2-24
The fateful, untimely,	
tragic death of my beloved Beatrice	
in the bloom of her beauteous youth was	2-27
the crucial turning point	
in my life,’ <i>says Dante in tears.</i>	
‘The fervid flame of your sublime true love	2-30

*Song 2: Conception of the Divine Comedy*

of Beatrice seems to burn  
still ablaze in your heart, Dante!  
I wonder how such a mysterious love 2-33  
of Beatrice was conceived  
in your heart.' 'I was nine years old,'  
*says Dante*, 'when graceful, beauteous Beatrice 2-36  
manifested herself to me  
for the first time in a breathtaking  
splendour. Her dress was of a most noble 2-39  
colour, girdled and adorned  
as best suited with her beautiful  
tender age. At that moment, I say most 2-42  
truly that the spirit  
of life which dwelt in the heart  
began to tremble so violently that 2-45

**Song 2: Conception of the Divine Comedy**

the least pulses of my body  
shook therewith. And in trembling,  
it said these words: “*Here is a deity* 2-48  
*stronger than I; Who,*  
*thus coming, shall rule over me.*”  
At that moment, the animate spirit which 2-51  
dwelt in the lofty chamber,  
where all the senses carried out  
their perceptions, was filled with wonder, 2-54  
and speaking especially  
to the spirit of the eyes, said these words:  
“*Your beatitude has now been made manifest* 2-57  
*unto you.*” From that time  
forward, Love presided over my soul.  
In my boyhood, I often went in search 2-60

*Song 2: Conception of the Divine Comedy*

of her and found her so  
noble and admirable that certainly  
of her might have been saying those words 2-63  
of the great bard Homer:  
*“She seems not to be a daughter  
of a mortal man, but God.”* And albeit 2-66  
her image that was always  
with me, sound exultation of Love  
subdued me in such perfect ways that it 2-69  
never allowed without  
the faithful counsel of reason.’  
‘You’ve been such an ardent romantic lover!’ 2-72  
*exclaims the dreamer in thrill,*  
‘Did you confess your love to Beatrice,  
and propose to her to be your beloved wife?’ 2-75

*Song 2: Conception of the Divine Comedy*

‘No,’ says *Dante in tears*,  
‘our love remained as a poignant  
private secret. Nine years after our first      2-78  
meeting, the gracious young  
lady appeared to me, dressed all  
in pure white between two elderly ladies.      2-81  
And passing through a street,  
she turned her eyes towards where I  
stood sorely abashed in bliss. By her gentle      2-84  
graciousness, she saluted me  
with such a virtuous demeanour  
that I seemed to behold the very summit      2-87  
of sublime beatitude  
in her. Because it was the first time  
that any words from her reached my ears, I came      2-90

*Song 2: Conception of the Divine Comedy*

into such a blissful  
elation that I parted thence as one  
intoxicated, retreating to the solitude 2-93  
in my room to cherish  
this most gracious lady. From that  
night forth, the natural functions of my body 2-96  
began to be vexed and  
impeded because I was given up  
completely to thinking of my most gracious 2-99  
and lovely Beatrice.’ ‘I feel  
the utmost bliss and pang of such  
feverish sickness of passionate love,’ 2-102  
*says the dreamer with heartfelt*  
*empathy.* ‘Beatrice showed herself  
gracious and so full of perfection that 2-105

*Song 2: Conception of the Divine Comedy*

she bred in those who had  
beheld her blissful, serene peace.  
She was so much admired by people; yet 2-108  
she humbled herself with true  
humility, showing no whit of vain  
pride in all things that she had heard and seen. 2-111  
Her noble virtue and  
breathtaking beauty inspired me  
to write ardent poems in the “*new sweet style.*” 2-114  
‘How fascinating it is  
for me to learn,’ says *the dreamer*,  
‘that Beatrice was a real person who lived 2-117  
in Florence as your neighbour.  
Who were her parents?’ ‘Her father  
was Folco Portinari, a wealthy banker 2-120



**Song 2: *Conception of the Divine Comedy***

and great philanthropist  
in Florence,’ *says Dante*. ‘Did you  
confess to him how dearly you had loved 2-123  
Beatrice and ask for his blessing  
to marry her?’ ‘No, I have never  
spoken to him about our marriage,’ *says Dante* 2-126  
*in heartbreaking anguish*  
*and regret*. ‘As you loved Beatrice  
truly, why did you not try to do your best 2-129  
to make her your beloved wife?’  
‘My father, Alighiero, had already  
contracted with a powerful noble, Mannetto 2-132  
Donati, to marry me  
to his daughter, Gemma, when I was  
only twelve years old;’ *says Dante in renewed* 2-135

*Song 2: Conception of the Divine Comedy*

*throes of agony*, ‘I was  
too cowardly to breach the marriage  
contract. Gemma and I were married when 2-138  
I was twenty.’ ‘But you  
could not forget Beatrice, I guess,  
even after you had married Gemma. 2-141  
Was she not a good wife  
for you, Dante?’ ‘Gemma was  
a faithful wife of good upbringing. She was 2-144  
a devoted and affectionate  
mother of our three sons and one  
daughter. I am very thankful for her devotion 2-147  
and upright integrity.  
I repent that I was a poor  
husband to her. She suffered harsh, hard life 2-150

*Song 2: Conception of the Divine Comedy*

due to my political stance  
which caused my life-long exile  
from my dear family and my revered city, 2-153  
Florence. I admit that  
Gemma deserved a much better  
man to have as her noble husband than I: 2-156  
An outcast oppressed by  
my political foes. Despite her  
virtues as a good wife and mother, 2-159  
however, Gemma could not  
give me the gentle inspirations  
of blissful and sublime love as gracious 2-162  
Beatrice affected my soul  
from afar in very mysterious and  
subtle ways.' 'I see. Did Beatrice marry 2-165

*Song 2: Conception of the Divine Comedy*

another man?’ ‘Two years  
after I was married to Gemma,  
Beatrice was wedded to Simone Bardi, 2-168  
a prominent rich banker  
in Florence. A sad event happened  
two years later: the father of Beatrice 2-171  
suddenly passed away.  
I heard from my friends that gentle  
Beatrice had been so gravely succumbed by 2-174  
deep sorrows and anguishes  
that she might not recover herself.  
Awful fears of her untimely death distressed 2-177  
and tormented my helpless  
morbid mind. In dreadful nightmares,  
I foresaw my gracious Beatrice departing 2-180

*Song 2: Conception of the Divine Comedy*

to heaven. Within a year,  
she passed away from this sad world of  
awful miseries to blissful heaven, leaving me 2-183  
utterly forlorn in  
helpless dark despairs!’ *says Dante,*  
*heartbroken in renewed pangs of anguishes.* 2-186  
*When Dante recovers*  
*his composure, he notices that*  
*the strange dreamer is weeping silently.* 2-189  
‘Why do you weep?’ *says he,*  
‘Did my sad story of unfulfilled  
love touch your sensitive heart?’ ‘Yes, it moves 2-192  
me deeply to hear such  
a poignant story of your ardent  
love of Beatrice. How did you overcome such 2-195

Song 2: *Conception of the Divine Comedy*

terrible devastating  
crises when your beloved Beatrice  
had passed away?’ *asks the dreamer with earnest,* 2-198  
*warm, heartfelt empathy.*

‘Inscribing my feelings and thoughts  
into honest poems—that was my saviour. 2-201

From the personal and  
secret book of my memory,  
I toiled to transcribe something ineffable 2-204  
into plain honest words,  
and weaved them into a little  
book of poetry: “*La Vita Nuova.*” 2-207

It was my confession  
of the sacred immortal love  
of gracious blessed Beatrice: I wished to 2-210

*Song 2: Conception of the Divine Comedy*

attest that Beatrice was  
a true giver of the divine  
blessing. She endowed her grace to ennoble 2-213  
others, not only while she  
was present in this world but also  
even after she had ascended to heaven, 2-216  
by impressive mystic  
power of the memory of her person  
working wondrously in our minds. Hence, I 2-219  
resolved to write something  
about her gentle, gracious influence  
to the purpose that not only they who had 2-222  
beheld her in person  
but others might know as much as  
it may concern her virtue as words could 2-225

Song 2: *Conception of the Divine Comedy*

impart to the human  
understanding,' *says Dante deep*  
*from his sincere and passionate heart.* 2-228

'Thank you, Dante, for sharing  
with me about your sublime true love  
of the real person—Beatrice. Now I see,' 2-231  
*says the elated dreamer,*

'your noble purpose and ingenious  
design of your *Divine Comedy*. It seems 2-234  
to me that there must be

three-persons within one Dante:  
You, Dante-the poet, who wrote the epic; 2-237

Dante-the character,  
the protagonist-pilgrim who  
undertakes the supernatural journeys; 2-240



*Song 2: Conception of the Divine Comedy*

And Dante-the lover  
who keeps on yearning for Beatrice,  
transcending the insurmountable abyss 2-243  
between the quick and the dead!’  
*Thus exclaims the elated dreamer,*  
*deeply moved by the sublime love of Dante.* 2-246

## **Song 3**

*Poetic Transfiguration*

**Song 3: Poetic Transfiguration**

‘It is interesting  
to hear what you think; tell me how  
those three persons in a Dante would work 3-3  
in your fanciful view  
on my tragic *Commedia*,’  
*says Dante with honest curiosity.* 3-6  
‘First of all, I admire  
your poetic genius in choosing  
the great bard Vergil to be character- 3-9  
Vigil who guides character-  
Dante to take on the astral journeys  
in your autobiographical spiritual poem: 3-12  
*The Divine Comedy.*  
The beginning Canto in which  
Dante-character comes upon Virgil 3-15

**Song 3: Poetic Transfiguration**

in the dreadful dark woods  
takes away my breath in awe and thrill:  
“*Help, pity me!*” cries the Dante-character, 3-18  
“*whatever you are,*  
*a living man, or a spectre*  
*of a dead.*” “*Not a man alive, though once* 3-21  
*a man I was. Late in*  
*the time of Julius I was born*  
*in Mantua, and lived in Rome while great* 3-24  
*Augustus reigned. I sang*  
*of the heroic adventures*  
*of brave, pious Aeneas who had escaped* 3-27  
*from the fallen Troy and came*  
*here to found our glorious Rome.*”  
Bowing to the shade in awe and wonder, 3-30

**Song 3: Poetic Transfiguration**

Dante-character speaks:

*“Virgil must you be! Our revered,  
very fountainhead from which such a great flood    3-33  
of eloquence has flowed.*

*O light and honour of all other  
poets, may my long-devoted study of your book    3-36  
and my great love for it*

*avail me now! You are my master  
and author. It is from you alone that I    3-99  
have taken the lofty style*

*in which I toil to write my private poems.”*

*Would you please condone my poor reiterating    3-42  
of your lofty Commedia,*

*Dante,’ says the elated dreamer.*

*‘Your dreaming fascinates me. Please keep on    3-45*

**Song 3: Poetic Transfiguration**

telling me what you dream next  
in my *Commedia*,’ says Dante  
with genuine curiosity. Thus encouraged, 3-48  
the dreamer expounds what  
he admires and why: ‘The next  
episode reveals the moving poetic 3-51  
miracles: Virgil explains  
to Dante-character that there are  
no other way to come out the dreadful 3-54  
hopeless woods but to take on  
a hard journey through the Hell  
as a humble, devout pilgrim to learn 3-57  
how sinners are punished.  
He would guide Dante-character  
safely to descend to the very bottom 3-60

**Song 3: Poetic Transfiguration**

of the Hell, and then rise  
to reach the Purgatory, where  
diverse sinners strive to purge their sins. 3-63

But Dante-character  
confesses to Virgil his obvious  
incompetence and inaptitude in 3-66

carrying out such heroic  
and formidable tasks: *"I know  
too well, Virgil, that I'm not an Aeneas,* 3-69

*chosen by heaven  
to father Rome and all her great  
realms that were ordained to be the holy* 3-72

*place where the Saint Peter's  
follower rules. By undertaking such  
adventures to the realm of Dis, for which* 3-75

**Song 3: Poetic Transfiguration**

*he is glorified in  
your epic, Aeneas learns crucial  
unseen things there—his great destiny; who* 3-78  
*he is and what he is  
to accomplish. Hence, his journey  
is ordained and justified. But I—how* 3-81  
*can I dare to take on  
such a task beyond my lot and wit?  
By whose decree am I allowed to try it?* 3-84  
*I know that I am too  
inane and unfit for the task.”*  
Then, Virgil speaks in dismay: “*Your soul is* 3-87  
*oppressed with cowardice,  
which often is a stumbling block  
to man to turn him back from a worthy start.* 3-90



**Song 3: Poetic Transfiguration**

*To dissolve your fear, I will  
tell you why I came here to help you:  
While I was among those spirits suspended in      3-93  
the Hell, a lovely blessed  
lady descended from her blissful seat  
in the Paradise and came to me. At once, I      3-96  
asked her what her command was.  
Her eyes were gleaming brighter than  
a star when she replied in accents mild,      3-99  
her voice serene and like  
an angel's clear: "O courteous  
soul of Mantua, whose fame has long endured      3-102  
on the Earth above and shall  
prosper as time keeps on moving,  
a friend of mine—but fortune's poor victim—      3-105*

**Song 3: Poetic Transfiguration**

is so beset amid his life's  
journey. I fear lest he has strayed  
so far that I have come too late to help him. 3-108

Please go to him; and help  
and encourage him with your wise  
cogent speech and whatever he may need 3-111

to be saved, so that I  
may be consoled. I am Beatrice;  
I ask you to act. Love moves me; it is 3-114  
love that makes me speak.

When I stand again before my Lord,  
I will praise your graciousness.”” *Thus spoken* 3-117

*to me, she wept and turned*  
*on me her radiant eyes, whereby*  
*she made me still quicker to go. So, I came* 3-120

**Song 3: Poetic Transfiguration**

*here to help you as she  
has wished. Why does cowardice  
oppress your heart? Why do you hesitate?* 3-123

*Why do you lack in courage  
and in zeal, when Beatrice in heaven  
entreats for your salvation and I myself  
pledge to guide you safely?"* 3-126

Inspired by Virgil's eloquent speech,  
the revitalized Dante-character replies: 3-129

*"How compassionate  
my blessed lady is! How kind you are,  
so willing to help me! By your cogent arguments* 3-132  
*you have revived my heart*

*to such an eagerness to take on  
the journeys. Please lead on! May one sole* 3-135

**Song 3: Poetic Transfiguration**

*inspire us both. Be you,  
my leader; be you, my lord and  
fatherly master!” Thus concludes Canto Two* 3-138  
*of your Inferno, Dante,  
as I recall,’ says the dreamer.*

‘Yes. But I wonder what the poetic 3-141  
*miracles, which you have  
alluded to it, are,’ says Dante*

*in perplexity. The dreamer keeps a silence,* 3-144  
*while musing how to  
express what he thinks about Dante’s  
poetic artistry of The Divine Comedy.* 3-147

*At last, he speaks earnestly:*

‘With the author’s license, you, Dante-  
poet, have endowed Beatrice with a divine 3-150

**Song 3: Poetic Transfiguration**

power to find Virgil	
in the Hell and moves him so	
that he would persuade Dante-character	3-153
to take on the grim, hard	
adventures through the awful Hell	
and the Purgatory, guided by prudent	3-156
wise Virgil, and then to	
join with his beloved Beatrice to	
see the Paradise guided by her at last.	3-159
Hence, the private love-	
story of Dante-lover undergoes	
the miraculous “ <i>poetic transfiguration</i> ”	3-162
into soul-searching, cosmic,	
and supernatural adventures of	
Dante-character, the protagonist-pilgrim.	3-165

**Song 3: Poetic Transfiguration**

Beatrice's true love sets it  
off into motion, which is exalted  
in your sublime spiritual *Divine Comedy*. 3-168

Such a sheer breathtaking  
poetic transfiguration inspires  
me to breathe in your sublime artistry! 3-171

That is why I love  
your poem deeply, even though I don't  
understand your arguments of the Christian  
theology at all.' 3-174

'You have a keen insight, my dear  
daydreamer. But I wonder what you mean  
by your peculiar phrase,

*poetic transfiguration,*' says  
*Dante*. 'I made up the phrase to express 3-180

Song 3: *Poetic Transfiguration*

something I don't really  
know,' *confesses the dreamer*,  
'Yet, somehow, I feel it deep in me: it is 3-183  
about the mysterious,  
superb, and transcendental poetic  
artistry: you, Dante-poet, have portrayed 3-186  
the character-Beatrice,  
the character-Virgil, and  
the character-Dante—the protagonist 3-189  
of your *Divine Comedy*—  
in such ways that your character-  
Beatrice transcends the real person, once lived 3-192  
in Florence; so does your  
character-Virgil, the historical  
Vergil of Rome; and your character-Dante 3-195

*Song 3: Poetic Transfiguration*

transcends its author,  
the poet-Dante. In creating  
such a moving transcendental poem, 3-198  
I would say the poet  
undergoes a transfiguration  
into an exalted higher being; it seems 3-201  
to me, the miracle  
of an artistic apotheosis!’  
‘I see,’ says *Dante*, ‘what you are trying 3-204  
to mean. But what you  
have uttered makes a pious poet  
blasphemous, although I appreciate your keen 3-207  
insight and good intention:  
Transfiguration is of God, not  
of man. Man must not pretend to be God!’ 3-210



**Song 3: Poetic Transfiguration**

‘I wish to know how you  
have attained such an artistry  
in writing poems. Did you learn it from 3-213  
your revered poet, Vergil,  
or any others who imparted to you  
the sacred secrets in miraculous ways? 3-216  
Or, have you attained it  
by yourself through mysterious  
inner awakenings?’ *asks the elated dreamer.* 3-219

## **Song 4**

*The Aeneid of Vergil: Book Six*

Song 4: *The Aeneid of Vergil: Book Six*

‘The great Roman poet,  
Publius Vergilius Maro, has been  
my mentor and spiritual father,’ *says Dante*, 4-3  
‘who inspired me how to sail  
across the deep, vast sea of poetry,  
transcending the abyss of thirteen centuries. 4-6  
In his tragic epic,  
*The Aeneid*, Vergil sings in glory:  
“*Arms and the man who from the coast 4-9*  
*of Troy, exiled by fate, came to Italy and*  
*Lavinian shores; much buffeted on sea*  
*and land by violence from above, due to 4-12*  
*cruel Juno’s unforgiving wrath, and much*  
*enduring in wars, till he should build a city,*  
*and bring his gods to Latium; whence came 4-15*

**Song 4: *The Aeneid of Vergil: Book Six***

*the Latin race, the lords of Alba,  
and the walls of great Rome... ”*

My *Commedia* has been deeply influenced 4-18

by *The Aeneid*, especially  
the bold supernatural adventure  
of pious Aeneas to the unseen realm 4-21

of the dead to see his late  
father, Anchises, and to learn  
his destiny to found Rome and its future.’ 4-24

‘I wish to learn what you  
think of such a breathtaking and  
supernatural adventure of Aeneas 4-27

in Book Six of *The Aeneid*,’  
*says the dreamer with enthusiasm.*

‘I will recount the moving episode so that 4-30

Song 4: *The Aeneid of Vergil: Book Six*

you appreciate the great  
poetic artistry of Vergil:

*“The Trojan fleet arrived at Cumae, where  
the revered Sibyl resided*

*in a huge dark cave. Aeneas  
visited her and entreated: “Awe-inspiring*

*prophetess, foreknowing  
things to come, I ask no kingdom  
other than fate allows me; let our people  
settle in Latium.”*

*The Sibyl of Cumae sang out  
her riddles, echoing the cave: “Now you quit*

*the sea’s dangers, but greater  
are in store on land; the Trojans will  
reach Lavinian land, but there will wish*

**Song 4: *The Aeneid of Vergil: Book Six***

they had not come; wars,  
vicious wars I see ahead, and  
the Tiber foaming blood.”” *Bold Aeneas spoke:* 4-48

“I knew them; I went through them  
in my mind. One thing I pray for:  
Since it is here, one finds the dark passage 4-51

to the underworld, may I  
have leave to go there and see  
my dear father, Anchises. Please guide me! 4-54

Through fires and with thousands  
of spears behind, I had brought him  
on my shoulders and rescued him amid our enemies. 4-57

He shared my voyage, bore  
all seas with me, hard nights and days  
of menace from the sea and the sky beyond 4-60

**Song 4: *The Aeneid of Vergil: Book Six***

the strength and lot of old age,  
frail though he was. Indeed, he prayed  
this very prayer: he told me that I should come 4-63  
to you and beg it earnestly.

Pity a son and father, gracious  
lady; all this is in your power. Hecate 4-66  
gave you the authority  
to have and hold Avernus wood.””

*The Sibyl said:* ““The way downward is easy. 4-69

The gate to Dis is open  
for all. But to retrace your steps  
back to light is very hard; there is the toil. 4-72

Avernus leads to dark  
forests, then to Cocytus winding  
through the desolate gloom. But if you feel 4-75

**Song 4: *The Aeneid of Vergil: Book Six***

such love and desire to see  
your father, crossing the Stygian  
water and viewing the Tartarus twice— 4-78  
if such a mad adventure  
is what you wish to take, then you  
must first prove your ability for it: 4-81  
There is a strange bough whose  
leaves and pliant twigs are all of gold.  
Lush groves shelter it, and thick shades of dusky 4-84  
valleys shut it in. Yet,  
no one may come back from hidden  
depths below, unless he picks this rare bough 4-87  
with its foliage of gold;  
Proserpina decreed this bough as  
her due. Hence, search for it in the forests. 4-90



**Song 4: *The Aeneid of Vergil: Book Six***

If you are called by fate,  
you will obtain the crucial bough.””  
*Guided by two doves, sent by his mother Venus,* 4-93  
*Aeneas found the golden bough,*  
*hidden deep in the gorge of*  
*Avernus and carried it to the Sibyl's cave.* 4-96  
*The Sibyl cried: ““Away,*  
*all those unblessed, away! Depart*  
*from this cavern! But you, Aeneas, enter* 4-99  
*this path to the dark depth*  
*with bold, brave, resolute resolve!””*  
*Hurling herself wildly into the depth* 4-102  
*of the dark mystic cavern,*  
*the Sibyl led Aeneas striding boldly*  
*at her heels. Passing through horrible* 4-105

**Song 4: *The Aeneid of Vergil: Book Six***

*phantoms, they reached the shores  
of Acheron. Thick with mud, whirlpools  
out of a vast abyss boiled up and belched 4-108  
stinking slits it carried  
into Cocytus. The ferryman,  
Charon, was the king of this gruesome region: 4-111  
He looked foul and terrible,  
his beard grown wild and hoar; his staring  
eyes sending out fires. Alone, he poled his boat 4-114  
and set sails; in his rusty hull,  
he ferried the dead for timeless ages.  
Countless souls came here, streaming to the banks. 4-117  
They stood begging to be  
first to be ferried and reached out  
longing hands to the other unseen shore. 4-120*

**Song 4: *The Aeneid of Vergil: Book Six***

*But the grim boatman took  
only some aboard, waving the rest back  
from the strand. In wonder at this and touched* 4-123  
*by their sad commotion,*  
*Aeneas asked: “Tell me, prophetess,*  
*what this means, the countless miserable throngs,* 4-126  
*waiting at the banks. Where are*  
*these souls bound to? How are they tested,*  
*and chosen to take oars to cross the dead water?”* 4-129  
*The ancient Sibyl replied:*  
*“Charon may not take the dead until*  
*their bones rest properly in the graves, or* 4-132  
*till they flutter and roam*  
*this side a hundred years, and then*  
*may come back to cross the deep they long for.”* 4-135

**Song 4: *The Aeneid of Vergil: Book Six***

*As they reached the Stygian banks,*  
*Charon cried out aloud: ““Who are you*  
*in armour, visiting alive here? Speak from* 4-138  
*where you are, stop there.*  
*Say why you came. This is the realm*  
*of the Shades, drowsy Sleep, and Night.* 4-141  
*It breaks eternal law*  
*for the Stygian boat to carry*  
*living bodies!”” The Sibyl spoke to angry* 4-144  
*Charon: ““Here is Aeneas*  
*of Troy, remarkable for loyalty*  
*as well as great in arms, courage, and wisdom.* 4-147  
*He goes through the deep*  
*shades of Erebus to see his father,*  
*Anchises, in Elysium. If the very image* 4-150

**Song 4: *The Aeneid of Vergil: Book Six***

of his goodness moves  
you not at all, look this bough  
to be offered to Queen Proserpina 4-153  
by this pious hero!””  
*Charon fixed his eyes on the bough  
in a great surprise and respect; he turned 4-156  
his dusky boat and made for shore.  
From the long thwarts where they sat, he  
cleared the other souls and made the gangway 4-159  
wide, letting the massive man  
alive step in the shaky shabby bilge.  
The leaky coracle groaned at the heavyweight 4-162  
and took in a flood of swampy  
water. At last, Charon reached  
the other side of Acheron and put ashore 4-165*

**Song 4: *The Aeneid of Vergil: Book Six***

*Aeneas and the Sibyl.*

*There they saw Great Cerberus barking  
with his triple throat that made all shorelines      4-168  
tremble. The Sibyl tossed him*

*a lump of honey and a drugged meal  
to make him drowse. Three ravenous gullets      4-171  
gaped, and he snapped up the sop.*

*Then his huge bulk collapsed and lay down  
through the cave. Seeing the watchdog fallen      4-174  
deep in sleep, avid Aeneas*

*took the opening; swiftly, he turned away  
from the river over which no soul returns.      4-177*

*They came to the Field of  
Mourning; here were those whom pitiless  
love consumed with cruel wasting, hidden on paths      4-180*

**Song 4: *The Aeneid of Vergil: Book Six***

*apart by myrtle woodland  
growing overhead. In death itself,  
their anguish of love would not let them be.* 4-183

*Among them, with her fatal  
wound still fresh, Queen Dido wandered  
the dark woods. In shock, Aeneas saw her dim* 4-186  
*figure. He wept and spoke  
tenderly to her: “Dido, so  
desolate, the sad rumour which came to me* 4-189  
*was true; that you had met  
your tragic end by your own hand.  
Was I the cause? I swear by heaven’s stars,* 4-192  
*by the high gods, by any  
certainty below the earth, I left  
your land against my will, my Queen. The gods’* 4-195

Song 4: *The Aeneid of Vergil: Book Six*

commands drove me to do  
their will, as now, they drive me through  
this dark world of shades. I could not believe 4-198  
that I would hurt you so  
terribly by leaving. Wait a little.  
Do not leave my sight. Am I someone 4-201  
to flee from? The last word  
destiny lets me say to you  
is this.”” *With such heartfelt pleas, Aeneas tried* 4-204  
*to placate the burning soul*  
*of Dido, fiercely glaring back. But*  
*she had turned with gaze fixed on the ground* 4-207  
*as he spoke on, her face*  
*was no more affected than as if she were*  
*a stone. Then she flung away from him and fled* 4-210



**Song 4: *The Aeneid of Vergil: Book Six***

*into the shadowy grove*  
*where Sychaeus, her husband, joined*  
*in her sorrows and returned her love. Aeneas* 4-213  
*still gazed after her in tears,*  
*shaken by her ill fate and pitying her.*  
*The Sibyl spoke to him: “Come now, be on* 4-216  
*your way, and carry out*  
*your mission. Let us go faster.*  
*I can see the walls the Cyclops’ forges built,* 4-219  
*the portico and gate*  
*where they command us to leave the bough.”*  
*In haste, the two strode on dark paths to the gate.* 4-222  
*Aeneas gained the entrance,*  
*cleansed his body with fresh water*  
*and dedicated the bough to the Queen of the Dead.* 4-225

**Song 4: *The Aeneid of Vergil: Book Six***

*Now, that this ritual was  
performed, at last, they came to  
places of delight where souls take ease amid 4-228  
the Blessed Groves. Wider expanses  
of high air endowed each vista  
with a wealth of light. Here settled in heroes 4-231  
of great heart and handsome  
scions born in the past grander eras.  
Aeneas marvelled to see their chariots and 4-234  
gear far off, all phantoms.  
He saw souls who feasted and  
chorused out hymns praising Apollo in fragrant 4-237  
laurel grove. They were heroes  
who suffered wounds in battles for  
their country; those who in their lives were chaste 2-240*

**Song 4: *The Aeneid of Vergil: Book Six***

*holy men; or those who  
bettered human life by finding out  
new truths and skills; or those who contributed* 4-243  
*benefaction to others.*

*They all wore snowy chaplets on  
their brows. To these souls, mingling on all sides,* 4-246  
*the Sibyl spoke: ““Tell us,  
happy souls, what region holds  
Anchises? Where is his resting place? For him* 4-249  
*we came here, ferrying across  
the rivers of Erebus.”” A great soul  
answered: ““None of us has one fixed home here:* 4-252  
*We walk in shadowy groves  
and bed on the riverbanks carefree.*

*If your hearts are set to find Anchises,* 4-255

**Song 4: *The Aeneid of Vergil: Book Six***

I shall point out an easy path.””

*So saying, he walked ahead and showed  
them from the height the sweep of shining plane.* 4-258

*At that time, Anchises  
spotted his beloved son coming afar.  
He rushed to welcome him and spoke in tears:* 4-261

““You have come, at last,  
my son! Your devout loyalty to me  
has conquered fears and perils of your hard  
adventures to this realm

of the dead. Here, I greet you alive,  
my beloved son! How many lands behind you, 4-267

how many seas, what harsh blows  
and dire dangers you have overcome!  
How much I feared that the land of Libya 4-270

**Song 4: *The Aeneid of Vergil: Book Six***

might do you harm with charm.””

*Then Aeneas spoke:* ““Your spirit,  
my dear father, often came to my mind, 4-273  
and impelled me to visit  
this strange realm of Dis. This gracious  
Sibyl guided me to make the numinous 4-276  
adventure possible  
to see you here at last. Let us  
thank her for her compassionate mercy.”” 4-279

*Anchises and his son  
humbly knelt to thank the Sibyl.  
Aeneas noticed that countless souls gathered 4-282  
along the banks of a strange stream.  
He asked what river flowed and what  
peoples made such a huge throng there. Anchises 4-285*

**Song 4: *The Aeneid of Vergil: Book Six***

*explained:* ““They are the souls  
for whom a second body is in store.  
Their drink is water of Lethe; it frees them 4-288  
from care in forgetfulness.  
For all this time, I have so much  
desired to show you these things and tell you 4-291  
of them face to face—to take  
the roster of my children’s children here,  
so that you may feel with me more happiness 4-294  
in founding Italy.””

*Elated with wonder, Aeneas asked:*

““Must we imagine, father, there are souls that 4-297  
go from here aloft to upper  
heaven and once more return to bodies’  
dead weight? The poor souls, how can they crave 4-300

**Song 4: *The Aeneid of Vergil: Book Six***

for our daylight so much?””

*Anchises said:* ““I will explain

each point to you, my son, not to leave you lost: 4-303

First, the sky and lands, sheets  
of water, the bright moon’s globe,  
the Titan sun and stars are fed within 4-306

by Spirit; then a Mind infused  
through all the members of the world  
makes one great living body of the mass. 4-309

From Spirit came the races  
of man and beast on lands, birds in  
the air, and fishes in waters. The fiery energy 4-312

from a heavenly source  
belongs to the generative seeds  
of all these creatures; so far as they are not 4-315

*Song 4: The Aeneid of Vergil: Book Six*

poisoned or clogged by  
mortal bodies, their free essence  
dimmed by earthiness and deathliness of flesh. 4-318

This makes them fear and crave,  
rejoice and grieve. Imprisoned in  
the darkness of the body, they cannot see 4-321  
clearly the heaven's air.

In fact, even when life departs  
on the last day, not all the scourges of 4-324  
the body pass from the soul,

not all distress of life. Inevitably,  
many malformations, growing together 4-327  
in mysterious ways,

become inveterate. Hence, they  
must undergo the discipline of stern 4-330



**Song 4: *The Aeneid of Vergil: Book Six***

punishments, and pay in  
penance for old sins: some hang full  
length in the empty winds, for others the stain 4-333  
of wrong is washed by floods,  
or burnt away by fire. We suffer  
each his own shade. We are sent through wide 4-336  
Elysium, where a few abide  
in happy lands, till the long day,  
the round of Time fulfilled, has worn our stains 4-339  
away, leaving the soul's  
heaven-sent perception clear to see  
the pure light of heaven. These other souls, 4-342  
when they have turned Time's wheel  
a thousand years, the god calls in the crowd  
to Lethe stream, so that they may see heaven again, 4-345

**Song 4: *The Aeneid of Vergil: Book Six***

and wish to re-enter  
into bodies, without remembering  
their previous lives.”” *Here paused Anchises.*” 4-348

Now, you see how deeply  
my *Commedia* is indebted to  
Vergil’s *Aeneid*,’ says *Dante sincerely.* 4-351

## **Song 5**

***On the Nature of Things***

**by Lucretius**

Song 5: *On the Nature of Things* by Lucretius

‘I am deeply impressed  
by Vergil’s abstruse aphorisms,  
expressed via his character-Anchises who 5-3  
resolutely asserts that:  
“First, the sky and lands, sheets of water,  
the bright moon’s globe, the Titan sun and stars 5-6  
are fed within by Spirit;  
Then a Mind, infused through all  
the members of the world, makes one great 5-9  
living body of the mass.  
From Spirit came the races of man  
and beast on lands, birds in the air, and fishes 5-12  
in waters. The fiery energy  
from a heavenly source belongs  
to the generative seeds of all these creatures.” 5-15

### Song 5: *On the Nature of Things* by Lucretius

Please help me, Dante,  
how to grasp what Vergil intended  
to reveal in such an abstruse mystical  
beginning of the world,’  
*says the pensive dreamer.* ‘It is  
a good question, but I cannot answer.  
Vergil seems to imply  
that each thing is fed within by  
‘*Spirit*’ to exist, and all living creatures  
came from ‘*Spirit*’ via fiery  
energy as their generative seeds.  
But he does not explicitly attribute  
the beginning of the world  
to its creation by ‘*Spirit*,’ or  
God as Moses does in *The Genesis*

Song 5: *On the Nature of Things* by Lucretius

of *The Bible*,' says Dante.

'It seems to me as if Vergil tried  
to allude that each thing comes to exist  
by its intrinsic cause—

'*Spirit*,' moved by '*fiery energy*'  
as its '*own generative seed*,' without  
an external creator

such as God. But how it may work  
in the real world, I cannot comprehend at all,'  
*says the perplexed dreamer.*

'Vergil might have been influenced by  
Lucretius's book, *On the Nature of Things*,  
as he wrote in the second

book of his *Georgics*, referring  
to Lucretius: "*Happy is he who has*

**Song 5: *On the Nature of Things* by Lucretius**

*discovered the causes of*  
*things, and has cast beneath his feet*  
*all fears, the unavoidable fate, and the din* 5-48  
*of devouring Netherworld*  
*of the dead.”* Have you read  
Lucretius’s poem? If so, tell me what 5-51  
you think about it as  
a heathen scientist who dreams of  
becoming a poet,’ says *Dante*. ‘Yes, I did; 5-54  
*De Rerum Natura*  
is a very relevant poem  
as I am interested in the nature of things. 5-57  
Lucretius has attempted  
to expound the nature of things  
on the basis of the atomic theories 5-60

**Song 5: *On the Nature of Things* by Lucretius**

of the ancient Greek  
naturalistic philosophers.  
I respect that *De Rerum Natura* 5-63  
is a courageous, bold,  
and enlightening poem which  
tries to save the ignorant helpless peoples 5-66  
from awful superstitions  
and dire fears of their false beliefs  
in absurd gods as Vergil has exalted it,' 5-69  
*says the dreamer.* 'What is  
the atomic theory?' *asks Dante.*  
'It postulates that the universe is made of 5-72  
two kinds of fundamental  
constituents: solid "*matter*" and  
empty "*void*." All things are formed by various 5-75



**Song 5: *On the Nature of Things* by Lucretius**

combinations of the basic  
indivisible units of matter,  
called “*atoms*,” with their particular 5-78  
configurations in  
the void. A complex thing can be  
dissolved into its elemental parts. All changes 5-81  
in things occur, according  
to the universal and eternal  
physical principles of nature, not by 5-84  
whims of human-like gods.  
Lucretius tried to explain that  
the awful catastrophes such as earthquakes, 5-87  
lightening, volcanic  
eruptions, and plagues as natural  
phenomena, not due to whimsical wrath 5-90

**Song 5: *On the Nature of Things* by Lucretius**

of the dreadful false gods  
and their unfair punishments of poor,  
unlucky, innocent victims. Hence, I confirm 5-93  
Vergil that Lucretius  
challenged valiantly against  
awful superstitions and terrible bigotry 5-96  
of false gods in his poem,’  
*says the dreamer with resolute*  
*conviction. Dante ponders deeply, then asks:* 5-99  
‘What do you think of  
the audacious Epicurean claim  
that a mortal person cannot possess 5-102  
an immortal soul which  
transcends the dissolution of body  
after one’s death?’ ‘As a scientist, I concur 5-105

**Song 5: *On the Nature of Things* by Lucretius**

with the incisive and  
terse Epicurean maxims: “*We had not  
existed before it happened that we were born* 5-108  
*by chance in this world;*  
*Only while we are alive, we are aware*  
*of our own existence. When we become* 5-111  
*inevitably dead, we*  
*cannot sense or remember anything.*  
*Hence, we can never know what death will bring* 5-114  
*to us.*” I confirm that  
all of our versatile cognitive  
activities such as perceiving things, 5-117  
remembering, reasoning,  
imagining, being conscious of oneself,  
and communicating our ideas with others 5-120

**Song 5: *On the Nature of Things* by Lucretius**

by use of our language,  
as we are trying to do it now,  
are due to the neural functions of the brains 5-123  
in our heads. But at death,  
our brains cease all their vital functions.  
Hence, our consciousness of the world as well as 5-126  
of oneself ceases at our death.  
The terse Epicurean arguments against  
an existence of hypothetical “*soul*,” which 5-129  
had been assumed to  
transcend the death of a person’s body,  
was aimed to confute the ancient antic myth 5-132  
of magical transmigration  
of a person’s ghost-like *soul*  
from the body at one’s death to a living body 5-135

**Song 5: *On the Nature of Things* by Lucretius**

of another person,  
I surmise,' *says the dreamer.*  
'Is that what you believe?' 'Yes, Dante. That is 5-138  
the stark fact. Now, I wish  
to learn what you think of the next  
abstruse aphorism about the fate of "soul" 5-141  
after death; Vergil wrote:  
*"Even when life departs, not all  
the scourges of the body pass from the soul,  
not all distress of life.*  
*Inevitably, many malformations  
growing together become inveterate. 5-147  
Thus, they must undergo  
the discipline of stern punishments  
and pay in penance for old sins. Some hang 5-150*

**Song 5: *On the Nature of Things* by Lucretius**

*full length in the empty winds,  
for others, the stain of wrong is washed  
by floods or burnt away by fire. We suffer* 5-153  
*each of his shade. We are  
sent through wide Elysium, where  
a few abide in happy lands, till the long day,* 5-156  
*the round of Time fulfilled,  
has worn our stains away, leaving  
the soul's heaven-sent perception clear to see* 5-159  
*the pure light of heaven.*  
*These other souls, when they have turned  
Time's wheel a thousand years, the god calls in* 5-162  
*the crowd to Lethe stream,  
so that they may see heaven again,  
and wish to re-enter into bodies, without* 5-165

**Song 5: *On the Nature of Things* by Lucretius**

*remembering their previous*  
*lives.*” Hence, Vergil seems to assume  
that each person’s ‘*soul*’ is immortal and 5-168  
can remember even  
after death one’s deeds, committed  
while the person was alive. I wish to learn 5-171  
who or what impels each ‘*soul*’  
to undergo just punishment  
(as in your *Inferno*); or pay with penance 5-174  
(as in your *Purgatorio*);  
Or is granted to see the pure light  
of heaven (as in your *Paradiso*).’ 5-177  
*Thus the dreamer asks Dante*  
*his soul-searching questions on ‘soul.’* 5-179

## **Song 6**

***The Myth of Er  
in The Republic of Plato***



**Song 6: *The Myth of Er in the Republic of Plato***

‘The fundamental premise  
of all religion, philosophy, and  
literature is our firm, devout belief  
in the immortality  
of our soul and the sanctity  
of the divine justice, I trust,’ says *Dante*  
*with solemnity,*  
‘My *Commedia* is firmly rooted  
to the very premise. I think that Vergil’s  
latter aphorism alludes  
to *The Myth of Er* in the final  
Book Ten of *The Republic* of Plato,  
who upholds the very same  
fundamental premise. As Plato’s  
imaginative *Myth of Er* has deeply influenced me,

6-3  
6-6  
6-9  
6-12  
6-15

**Song 6: *The Myth of Er in the Republic of Plato***

I will recount its gist:

It is a tale, the character-

Socrates tells the character-Glaucon; 6-18

It concludes their profound  
philosophical dialogue on justice,  
ideal state, free will, and responsibility. 6-21

The imaginative tale is  
about a fictional character,  
called Er, who was a hero slain in a battle. 6-24

On the twelfth day after  
his death, as his dead body was lying  
on the funeral pile, miraculously Er revived 6-27

back to life, and then reported  
what he had experienced in the realm  
of the dead to his friends alive in this world. 6-30

**Song 6: *The Myth of Er in the Republic of Plato***

Er said that when his soul  
left his body, it went on a journey  
with many other souls of the dead. They came 6-33  
to a mysterious place  
with four openings: two into and  
out of the ground, and the other two into 6-36  
and out of heaven.  
Judges sat between these openings  
and made their verdicts on each soul which path 6-39  
to follow. A good soul  
was guided to ascend to heaven  
whereas an evil soul was bidden to descend 6-42  
to the gloomy ground. But when  
Er came to the judges, they told him  
that he was selected to be a messenger 6-45

**Song 6: *The Myth of Er in the Republic of Plato***

who should report the fate  
of various souls after the death  
to living people in this world; they ordered 6-48  
Er to observe various  
experiences of good and evil souls.  
Er witnessed that good souls came out the opening 6-51  
from heaven; they recounted  
beautiful sights and blissful feelings.  
But those coming from the underground looked 6-54  
dirty, haggard, and exhausted,  
crying in despair when they recount  
their awful experiences, as everyone was required 6-57  
to pay a tenfold penalty  
for all misdeeds committed while alive.  
After they stayed seven days in the meadow, 6-60

*Song 6: The Myth of Er in the Republic of Plato*

the souls of Er and others  
had to move on their journey; they  
reached a wondrous place where they could see 6-63  
a column of bright light,  
extending through the whole sky and  
the earth, resembling a rainbow, only brighter 6-66  
and purer. Further journey  
brought them to the very spot, and there  
in the midst of the light, they saw the end 6-69  
of the chains of heaven  
let down from above. This light was  
the belt of heaven which held together the cosmic 6-72  
circle of the universe,  
like the under-girder of a trireme.  
From this point of the wondrous light extended 6-75

**Song 6: *The Myth of Er in the Republic of Plato***

the *Spindle of Necessity*

on which all cosmic revolutions  
pivoted. The whorl consisted of eight concentric 6-78  
spheres, fitted into one  
another in descending sizes: the largest  
and outermost sphere contained the fixed stars; 6-81  
The next sphere contained Saturn;  
The third sphere contained Jupiter;  
The fourth had Mercury; the sixth, Venus; 6-84  
The seventh contained the Sun;  
And the smallest and innermost sphere  
contained the Moon. These eight concentric 6-87  
celestial spheres were pierced  
by the spindle, driven home through  
the center. The spindle turned on the knees 6-90

**Song 6: *The Myth of Er in the Republic of Plato***

of the *Goddess Necessity*.

On the upper surface of each sphere  
was a siren, who went around hymning her  
own characteristic song. 6-93

The eight sirens sang in harmony.

There were also three daughters of *Necessity*: 6-96

The goddesses of Fates, called  
Lachesis, Clotho, and Atropos who  
accompanied with their voices the harmony  
of the eight sirens: 6-99

Lachesis is singing of the past;  
Clotho, of the present; and Atropos sings  
of the future. When the souls 6-102

of Er and others came to meet the Fates,  
a prophet arranged them in order, and then 6-105

**Song 6: *The Myth of Er in the Republic of Plato***

he took from the knee  
of Lachesis lots and samples of lives,  
and he spoke: "*Hear the word of Lachesis,* 6-108  
*the daughter of Necessity.*  
*Behold a new cycle of life and*  
*mortality! Your genius will not be* 6-111  
*allotted to you, but you*  
*will choose your genius, and let one*  
*who draws the first lot to have the first choice;* 6-114  
*The type of life one chooses*  
*shall be one's destiny. Virtue is*  
*free; whether one honours Her or not,* 6-117  
*the responsibility is*  
*with the chooser. God is justified!"*  
He scattered lots among the souls, and then each 6-120



**Song 6: *The Myth of Er in the Republic of Plato***

of them took up the lot,  
all but the soul of Er, because  
he was not allowed. Then the prophet placed 6-123  
many various samples of  
the lives of animals and humans  
in every condition. When the other souls 6-126  
had chosen the examples  
of their new lives, they went to Lachesis.  
She granted them their chosen geniuses who led 6-129  
them to Clotho. She drew them  
within the revolution of the spindle,  
ratifying the destiny of each. Then they 6-132  
were carried to Atropos,  
who spun the threads of fate and made them  
irreversible. These souls marched to the plain 6-135

**Song 6: *The Myth of Er in the Republic of Plato***

of Forgetfulness. They  
encamped by Lethe, the river of  
oblivion. These souls were required to drink  
its potent water. 6-138

Every soul became utterly  
oblivious of all things after the drink. 6-141

As they fell asleep at night,  
each soul was lifted in a mysterious  
way for its rebirth. But the soul of Er  
had been forbidden from 6-144

drinking of Lethe. The revived  
hero Er could not say to his astounded friends  
in what manner or by what  
means his soul returned to his body. 6-147

He said that he was suddenly awakened 6-150

**Song 6: *The Myth of Er in the Republic of Plato***

to find himself lying on  
the funeral pyre, and to recount  
his unique experiences of the journey 6-153  
through the unseen afterlife.  
This is a pithy gist of *The Myth*  
*of Er*, told by Socrates to Glaucon 6-156  
in the final book of  
*The Republic of Plato.* *Here ends*  
*Dante his recounting.* ‘Thank you, Dante. 6-159  
You’ve clarified for me  
the Vergil’s vague allusion to  
the Plato’s *Myth of Er*,’ says the dreamer 6-162  
*in genuine delight.*  
‘Tell me what you think of *The Myth*  
*of Er*,’ says Dante. ‘It seems to be a very 6-165

**Song 6: *The Myth of Er in the Republic of Plato***

imaginative story, which  
was created by an insightful and  
intelligent mind. The character *Er* reminds 6-168  
me of the character  
*Dante-pilgrim* of *The Divine*  
*Comedy*; it may be re-entitled as, 6-171  
if I may dare to say,  
*The Myth of Dante*, in my humble  
yet honest opinion,’ says *the dreamer*. 6-174  
‘Very well, fanciful dreamer,  
tell me why you think so,’ says *Dante*,  
*beaming subtle smiles*. ‘As I can comprehend 6-177  
neither Plato’s abstruse  
imaginations of the mysterious  
*Spindle of Necessity*, weaved by the three 6-180

**Song 6: *The Myth of Er in the Republic of Plato***

goddesses of Fates, nor  
the abstruse supernatural  
theology of the Christianity, 6-183  
it is impossible  
for me to justify why I think so.  
Yet, I feel that you, Dante-poet, know 6-186  
the truth of what I said  
far better than what I may dare  
to mutter in my poor speech. Nevertheless 6-189  
I will try to recount  
the fabulous tale of an astral  
messenger, called *Er-Dante*,’ says the Dreamer. 6-192

## **Song 7**

*The Epic of Astral*  
*Messenger Er-Dante*

**Song 7: *The Epic of Astral Messenger Er-Dante***

*Trembling in awe,  
the dreamer recites the fatal  
premonitions at the entrance to Inferno:* 7-3

‘ *“Through me you enter into  
the city of woe; through me you  
are led to throes everlasting; through me  
you shall come to the lost  
forever. Justice moved my sublime  
creator. I was made by the power  
divine, supreme wisdom,  
and primal love. Before I was  
created, nothing existed except things  
eternal. I shall endure  
forever. Abandon all hopes  
you who enter here!”* With these awe-inspiring 7-15

**Song 7: *The Epic of Astral Messenger Er-Dante***

verses, Dante, you took away  
my breath in your grave *Inferno!*  
‘You recall those words well. What else can you 7-18  
remember from *Inferno?*’  
*says Dante.* ‘I keep the vivid  
impressions of the gruesome yet exquisite 7-21  
architectures of *Inferno*:  
The Unbaptized in Circle One;  
The Carnal Sinners of Lust in Circle Two; 7-24  
Gluttony in Circle Three;  
Avarice and Prodigality in Circle Four;  
Wrath and Sullenness in Circle Five; 7-27  
Heresy in Circle Six;  
Violence, Murder, Suicide, Blasphemy,  
and Sodomy in Circle Seven; Circle Eight 7-30



**Song 7: *The Epic of Astral Messenger Er-Dante***

is subdivided into  
ten Malebolges: Fraud, Pimping, Seducing,  
Flattery, Simony, Sorcery, Political Corruption, 7-33  
Hypocrisy, Worse Fraud, Theft,  
Fraudulent Rhetoric, Divisiveness,  
Falsification. And the last Circle Nine 7-36  
at the bottom of Hell  
confines the worst sinners who committed  
treachery. Such is your awesome construct 7-39  
of *Inferno*, recounted by  
the astral messenger Er-Dante,'  
*says the dreamer*. 'It is merely a glimpse, 7-42  
peeking from its outside;  
To construct it in concrete words,  
however, I had to suffer acute pangs 7-45

Song 7: *The Epic of Astral Messenger Er-Dante*

of dreadful punishment  
for every sin as if I were  
the very sinner,’ says *Dante in renewed* 7-48  
*anguishes*. ‘I confess that  
just reading it makes me tremble  
in harrowing awe, fear, pity, and sorrow,’ 7-51  
*says the dreamer in awe*,  
‘I cannot imagine how much more  
you must have suffered, endured, and overcome 7-54  
to construct your *Divine*  
*Comedy* in such vivid, awe-inspiring  
depictions by your powerful imaginations. 7-57  
It is very difficult  
for me to grasp the deadly sins  
of the Christian theology—Wrath, Envy, 7-60

**Song 7: *The Epic of Astral Messenger Er-Dante***

Pride, Sloth, Gluttony, and Greed—  
which are purged by climbing up steep  
Mount Purgatory. The virtues exalted in 7-63  
your *Paradiso*—Prudence,  
Fortitude, Justice, Temperance,  
Faith, Hope, and Love—are difficult for me 7-66  
to comprehend as I lack  
the Christian faith. Nonetheless,  
the vivid, lucid depictions of the astral 7-69  
journey of the messenger  
*Er-Dante* who learns about each virtue  
as he ascends from Earth to the Empyrean 7-72  
sphere, gently guided by  
his beloved angel, Beatrice, are  
the Dante-poet's breath-taking feats of 7-75

Song 7: *The Epic of Astral Messenger Er-Dante*

*poetic transfiguration!’*

*says the dreamer in elation.*

‘I accept your tale of the *Er-Dante* 7-78

as a witty paraphrasing

of my *Commedia*,’ says Dante,

*beaming warm smiles*, ‘but there are fathomless 7-81

abyss between what one may

peruse and appreciate, which others

have created with hard toils of sweats and blood, 7-84

and what one can actually

write from his own vital creative

imaginations!’ ‘I know it, Dante; it is 7-87

as hard and perilous

as if one dared to cross between

the realm of the dead and that of the quick. 7-90

**Song 7: *The Epic of Astral Messenger Er-Dante***

Please reveal to me how  
you have transcended the impossible,’  
*asks the dreamer with sincere curiosity.* 7-93

‘I’ve striven to devote  
my life in writing of Beatrice,  
enduring harsh vicissitudes of my fate. 7-96

I had to born up  
cruel injustices, humiliations,  
and awful miseries. Condemned to death by  
my mother city, 7-99

Florence, I wandered in dark seas  
of merciless, horrible exiles; I had been 7-102

a ship without sails and  
a ruder, drifted into alien ports  
in diverse channels by futile winds which 7-105

Song 7: *The Epic of Astral Messenger Er-Dante*

dire poverty breathed forth.  
My *Inferno* is not an idle whim  
about others condemned, but honest reflections 7-108  
on my being. Bearing up  
all woes and throes of agonies,  
I devoted my life to writing my *Commedia*. 7-111  
I thank God for having  
sustained me to finish as it is,  
although it is defective. Did you know 7-114  
that Vergil had worried  
that he could not bring his *Aeneid*  
to a perfect completion? He instructed 7-117  
his literary executors  
to destroy his manuscript of *The Aeneid*,  
if he did not return from his journeys abroad 7-120

Song 7: *The Epic of Astral Messenger Er-Dante*

to learn how to finish it  
to perfection. So, I feel the same  
about my *Commedia* as Vergil did about 7-123  
his tragedy: *The Aeneid*.  
In the depth of my heart, I hoped that  
my *Commedia* would make me free to return 7-126  
to my beloved Florence  
as her dear poet; and at the font  
of my baptism, I should receive a fair 7-129  
end to my unjust, cruel  
exile. It was there I entered  
into the Faith of Christianity, 7-132  
and met my lady whose  
love and grace saved me from evils  
to behold the divine light. But my hopes 7-135

**Song 7: *The Epic of Astral Messenger Er-Dante***

turned out to be false dreams.  
My journey of this life has been  
delusions of vain pride, greed and ambition. 7-138  
May God absolve me from  
my deadly sins!’ *The lofty visage  
of the great poet glows in saintly humility.* 7-141  
‘O, Dante! Your *Divine  
Comedy* is the sublime epic  
that shines spiritual lights purging our hearts!’ 7-144  
*says the elated dreamer.*  
‘Nay, it is nothing but what I  
imagined; some of which, I realize too late, 7-147  
turn out to be gravely  
mistaken,’ *says Dante.* ‘What do  
you mean?’ *ask the dreamer in confusion* 7-150



Song 7: *The Epic of Astral Messenger Er-Dante*

‘If I were given a new  
life to rewrite *my Commedia*,  
I would not allot Vergil, Homer and 7-153  
other virtuous sages,  
who had happened to be born and worked  
before Christ came, to be hopelessly suspended 7-156  
in the Limbo of Hell.  
Deeply, I repent that I was  
too cowardly to overcome our Church’s strict 7-159  
dogma of the baptism  
as the absolute requirement  
for salvation,’ *says Dante turning pale* 7-162  
*in the throe of anguishes.*

\*

## **Song 8**

*Enigma of the Limbo*

**Song 8: *Enigma of the Limbo***

*Heavy air of silence*  
*suffocates the dark, dismal woods.*  
*After thoughtful reflection, the dreamer* 8-3  
*breaks the silence in awe:*

‘The Christian dogma of baptism  
is very perplexing to me, Dante.’ ‘Tell me 8-6  
your honest opinion  
about it.’ ‘As for its validity,’  
*says the heathen, ‘it seems to be an absurd* 8-9  
*inane nonsense. But I must*  
*also acknowledge that the baptism*  
*have been very effective, influential, and* 8-12  
*powerful propaganda*  
*to support and prosper the mighty*  
*religious institutions of Christianity.* 8-15

Song 8: *Enigma of the Limbo*

I confess that Canto Four  
of your *Inferno* is extremely  
difficult for me to understand.’ ‘Why?’ 8-18

‘You, Dante-poet, make  
Virgil-character speak to Dante-  
pilgrim when they reach the Limbo, the top- 8-21  
most ring that girdles

the abyss of the Hell: “*Ere we  
pass beyond, I wish to explain to you* 8-24  
*that these spirits we see here*

*have not sinned. Although they are worthy,  
this does not suffice, because they have never* 8-27  
*received the joy of holy*

*baptism, the essence of your Christian  
faith. But those who lived before the time of* 8-30

Song 8: *Enigma of the Limbo*

*Christ could never worthily  
adore their God; and I myself am  
of this company. For this defect, and no* 8-33  
*other wrongs, our souls are lost.*

*For this accident, we must endure  
the hopeless after-life of unfulfilled desires.”* 8-36

Dante-pilgrim becomes  
heart-stricken as he realizes that  
there are so many worthy souls who are eternally 8-39  
suspended in the Limbo.

Hence, he asks Virgil: “*Tell me,  
master, has no one yet, by merit of his own,* 8-42  
*or other’s help, gone forth*

*from here to heaven?”* Virgil replies:  
“*When I was still but new in this estate,* 8-45

**Song 8: *Enigma of the Limbo***

*to us came One upon  
whose noble brow a great victorious  
diadem shone forth. From here he led away 8-48  
the shade of him who was  
our first father; Abel's shade; his son's;  
Noah's, and Moses', the giver of the laws; the shades 8-51  
of Abraham the patriarch,  
of David; Israel's, his sire's and sons';  
and Rachel's for whose sake He did so much, 8-54  
and many more. These He  
beatified. Furthermore, know that  
previous to that time, no human spirits 8-57  
had ever been saved."*

If I recall correctly, these are  
what Virgil spoke to Dante-pilgrim 8-60

Song 8: *Enigma of the Limbo*

in the Limbo.’ ‘I admit  
that I put those words into the mouth  
of Virgil, as if he were testifying the truth 8-63  
of the Christian dogma  
of baptism, relying on his own  
personal experiences of the great first 8-66  
miraculous salvation  
of the chosen people by Christ  
soon after His own resurrection,’ *says* 8-69  
*Dante honestly.*  
‘Here I see your brilliant feat,’  
*says the dreamer,* ‘of the poetic irony: 8-72  
You transfigure Vergil—  
your revered poet—into a tragic  
hero, character-Virgil, who has to suffer 8-75

Song 8: *Enigma of the Limbo*

awful inequities,  
inflicted by the absurd dogma  
of baptism with such a noble, wise and 8-78  
magnanimous spirit.  
You make Virgil convince readers  
of your *Divine Comedy* to accept blindly 8-81  
the dogma of baptism,  
as if it were the absolute  
requirement for salvation of every 8-84  
human being. Despite  
your impressive poetic feat,  
however, I cannot believe what you 8-87  
have contrived in your  
episode as a proof of its truth.’  
*Thus confesses the heathen dreamer what he* 8-90



Song 8: *Enigma of the Limbo*

*thinks about the dogma of  
baptism with earnest and resolute  
stance. ‘Thank you for your honest criticism. 8-93*

I fear that my imagination  
of the Limbo in the *Inferno*  
vexes many good heathens,’ says *Dante*. ‘My poor 8-96  
opinions may be all wrong  
as I know nothing about “*salvation*.”

I do admire your ingenious creation 8-99  
of the subtle Limbo;

It is in the Limbo that Dante-  
pilgrim meets the renowned ancient poets: 8-102

*“Mark him who with that mighty  
sword in hand comes,” says Virgil,  
“leading those three others as their master. 8-105*

**Song 8: *Enigma of the Limbo***

*For he is Homer, the sovereign  
lord poet; and Horace next him there,  
the satirist; Ovid, the third; and Lucan* 8-108  
*walks behind. Since each one  
shares with me the name of a poet  
they honour me.”* When the great congregate 8-111  
of these illustrious poets  
have communed awhile together, they  
turn to Dante-pilgrim with courteous regards. 8-114  
And then, they honour him  
still more, inviting him to join them  
so that he becomes the sixth of that great 8-117  
congregate of intellects.  
In the Limbo, Dante-pilgrim  
sees also many kingly and heroic spirits: 8-120

*Song 8: Enigma of the Limbo*

Aeneas, Hector, and many  
other renowned Trojans. Caesar,  
Camilla; Latinus, Saladin, and many others. 8-123

It is also in the Limbo  
that Dante-pilgrim sees the lord  
of all wise men among the famed family 8-126

of thoughtful philosophers:  
Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates,  
standing above the others; Democritus 8-129

who thinks all things due to chance;  
Diogenes and Anaxagoras,  
Zeno, Empedocles, and Heraclitus; 8-132

Here he sees Seneca,  
Euclid, Ptolemy, Hippocrates,  
and Galen, Avicenna, and Averroes. 8-135

Song 8: *Enigma of the Limbo*

Would you agree with me,  
Dante, that these unbaptized sages  
have been the most virtuous, honourable 8-138  
and truthful human beings?’  
‘Yes, certainly I do revere them,’  
*says Dante.* ‘If so, then good Jesus should 8-141  
have saved them ahead he  
saved his old unbaptized Hebrew  
ancestors whom Dante-pilgrim meets in 8-144  
*Paradiso.*’ ‘You make sense,  
dear heathen dreamer,’ *says Dante,*  
‘The proper abode of these virtuous sages, 8-147  
I admit, cannot be  
the Limbo in the *Inferno*;  
It must be a lofty ethereal realm beyond 8-150

Song 8: *Enigma of the Limbo*

my paltry knowledge and  
imagination.’ ‘How deeply I would  
wish for,’ *says the elated heathen dreamer,* 8-153  
‘that you will accomplish  
such a lofty and sublime poetic  
transfiguration so that you will embrace 8-156  
the entire humanity  
in the past, at present, and  
in the future, transcending bigotry 8-159  
of diverse false beliefs.  
All human beings become modest,  
simple, honest, loving, and beloved friends!’ 8-162  
‘Your idealism may bloom,’  
*says Dante in a reflective voice,*  
‘in your fanciful daydreams; but it is 8-165

Song 8: *Enigma of the Limbo*

an illusion in this harsh  
human world; the evil vices of  
human beings are inevitable stark facts 8-168  
as depicted vividly  
in the nine Circles of my *Inferno*.’  
‘I am keenly aware of our grave defects,’ 8-171  
*says the dreamer*, ‘I have  
experienced horrible terrors  
and awful miseries of evil societies; 8-174  
Your systematic vivid  
depictions of how various sinners  
are punished through the terrifying nine 8-177  
Circles in your *Inferno*  
are astounding feats of your keen,  
incisive, overpowering poetic visions!’ 8-180

## **Song 9**

***Invention of Diverse State-Religions  
by Various Theocracies***

**Song 9: *Invention of Religions by Theocracies***

‘Diverse peoples in various  
cultures of the world have believed in  
very different faiths. The radical differences 9-3  
in their religions have  
been the awful causes or excuses  
for cruel religious wars in human history. 9-6  
Furthermore, the faith of  
a given people may change through  
generations of their offspring as we witness 9-9  
that the old Romans’ worship  
of the Olympian gods has changed  
to the faith of the Christian God in our era. 9-12  
Someday, the Christianity  
may be replaced by another new  
religion unknowable to me,’ *whispers* 9-15



**Song 9: *Invention of Religions by Theocracies***

*Dante to himself, rapt*  
*in a meditation.* ‘I appreciate  
your keen insightful reflection on 9-18  
the nature of humans’  
religions. They are culturally  
diverse and undergo radical changes 9-21  
by the fortunes of  
various competing theocratic  
societies which uphold their sanctity,’ 9-24  
*says the dreamer.* ‘If so,  
do you think that a religion  
is not the revelation of timeless deity 9-27  
but a mere temporary  
invention by mortal humans  
as a useful social device to survive 9-30

Song 9: *Invention of Religions by Theocracies*

and prosper in severe  
competitions with other human  
societies?’ asks Dante in solemnity. 9-33

‘Yes, I firmly believe  
that all of the *human-like deities*  
and their presumed revelations of *religions* 9-36

to certain *prophets* are  
subtle inventions, conjured up  
by some ambitious humans for theocracies; 9-39

They make up their hoax,  
*human-like deities* by the use  
of supple, imaginative human language; 9-42

They devise their magic  
religious rituals that enthrall,  
intoxicate, and enslave their subjects,’ 9-45

**Song 9: *Invention of Religions by Theocracies***

*says the dreamer.* ‘What do  
you mean by *theocracy*?’ *asks Dante.*  
‘The political system of each theocracy 9-48  
relies on its national  
religion which claims that its *deity*  
endows the divine authority to its monarch 9-51  
to rule his subjects  
with absolute political power.  
Hence, the invention of its state-religion 9-54  
empowers its monarch as  
a *theocratic* ruler of his kingdom;  
Some autocratic monarchs claim that they are 9-57  
the descendants of  
particular *gods* as portrayed in  
their myths of state-religions,’ *says the dreamer.* 9-60

*Song 9: Invention of Religions by Theocracies*

‘Some myths make such claims,’  
*agrees Dante.* ‘I surmise that such  
an ingenious invention of its theocratic  
religion of each state  
promoted its ruler to unify  
diverse egalitarian tribes of peoples;  
They were compelled to  
worship only the deity of their state.  
Hence, it was crucial in enthralling its subjects  
to obey their king as  
the divinely sanctified ruler,’  
*says the dreamer.* ‘Are you arguing that  
the invention of  
its national religion was  
the most critical factor for a monarchy

9-63  
9-66  
9-69  
9-72  
9-75

**Song 9: *Invention of Religions by Theocracies***

to survive in the stark  
competitions via ceaseless conflicts  
among many nations in the human history?’ 9-78  
*asks Dante.* ‘Yes, I think so.  
Moreover, I wish to emphasize that  
the peoples’ faiths undergo gradual changes. 9-81  
In the early era of Greece,  
priest-kings ruled their subjects with  
theocratic power by invoking the divine 9-84  
authority of their state-god,  
*Zeus.* Later in the Greek history,  
however, the citizens of each city-state, 9-87  
such as Athens and Sparta,  
elected their rulers by voting;  
They replaced the old theocracy with a new 9-90

**Song 9: *Invention of Religions by Theocracies***

advanced political system:  
The democracy. Nowadays, the Greek  
people do not worship the Olympian deities; 9-93  
They become fictional  
characters in the fascinating  
literatures of the ancient Greek myth, I think,' 9-96  
*says the dreamer.* 'Although  
I have never believed in  
the reality of Olympian deities, it didn't 9-99  
affect my enthusiastic  
admiration of the supreme epics  
of Homer; he portrayed his gods and goddesses 9-102  
with his superb poetic  
visions as vivid, vibrant, and  
realistic characters. They set out the heroic 9-105

**Song 9: *Invention of Religions by Theocracies***

epics into motions,  
unfolding the deeply moving  
tragedies of fateful struggles among the heroes 9-108  
in dire agonies. Homer  
endowed his divine characters  
with such intense human-like emotions 9-111  
and passions to exert  
their super-human powers over  
valiant human heroes in dire, tragic 9-114  
struggles, all conjured up  
by Homer's breathtaking creative  
imagination!' *says Dante in excitement.* 9-117  
'I agree completely  
with you, Dante; Homer sings of  
unreal things so vividly and convincingly 9-120

Song 9: *Invention of Religions by Theocracies*

as if they were real facts  
that we become enthralled to believe  
that he must know not only the mind of each      9-123  
hero but also that of  
every god or goddess who was  
portrayed in his breathtaking tragedies.      9-126

I marvel at Homer's  
poetic genius; he invokes  
the divine muses to be the omniscient      9-129  
narrator of his epics—  
a brilliant and ingenious  
poetic conceit! Hence, he wrought his epics,      9-132  
as if he were a super-  
divine *god-maker*. With imaginative  
and creative power of human language,      9-135



### Song 9: *Invention of Religions by Theocracies*

Homer has portrayed each unseen god of unique personality, more concrete and vivid than real living persons; Homer metes out each god what to do in divine affairs and their emotional intrusions in tragic human affairs.	9-138     9-141
All gods are bound to the very words that Homer puts in their mouths, obeying to the plot of his invented story, as if it had been imparted to Homer by his private divine muses!’	9-144    9-147
<i>says the dreamer.</i> ‘Invocation of the muses has become a splendid conceit to justify one’s poetry,’ <i>says Dante.</i>	9-150

Song 9: *Invention of Religions by Theocracies*

‘But Hesiod confessed in  
his famous poem, *The Theogony*,  
that when he invoked his muses to sing to him 9-153  
how the Greek deities and  
the world had come forth to exist,  
the muses had warned Hesiod, saying solemnly: 9-156  
“*Shepherds of the wilderness,*  
*wretched things, mere bellies, we know how*  
*to speak many false things as if they were true;* 9-159  
*But we know, when we will,*  
*to utter true things!*” Hence, if we  
trust Hesiod, his *Theogony* may be regarded 9-162  
as what he heard from his muses  
rather than his invention. But  
whether his muses had told him true things, or 9-165

**Song 9: *Invention of Religions by Theocracies***

lies as if they were true,  
neither Hesiod nor anyone could know.  
Hence, the invocation of divine muses does not 9-168  
prove the validity of what  
one narrates in the name of one's muses,'  
*says the dreamer*. 'You've alluded to the same point 9-171  
against the validity of  
private divine revelations, claimed  
by prophets,' *says Dante*. 'Xenophanes criticized 9-174  
Homer and Hesiod for  
their misrepresentation of Greek  
deities in their poems,' *says the dreamer*. 9-177  
'What? Who was Xenophanes?  
How did he argue that these superb  
Greek poets had misrepresented their deities?' 9-180

**Song 9: *Invention of Religions by Theocracies***

*asks Dante in a surprise.*

‘Xenophanes was born at Colophon,  
Greece, in the sixth century before Christ. 9-183

He was a wise, sincere  
and scientific philosopher  
in the great era of the natural philosophy. 9-186

Following the Milesian  
tradition of Thales, Anaximander  
and Anaximenes, he studied first concrete 9-189  
phenomena of nature

to infer the basic principles  
that embody phenomena. Travelling through 9-192  
the broad realms of Greece,

he settled in Sicily, and then in  
Magna Graecia. As for his works, only a few 9-195

**Song 9: *Invention of Religions by Theocracies***

fragments of his profound,  
terse, philosophical poems survive  
the ravage of time. Yet, they reveal to us 9-198  
Xenophanes's courageous,  
insightful, and enlightening ideas.  
Sternly, he criticized the traditional 9-201  
portrayal of the deities  
in the renowned poems of Homer  
and Hesiod as absurd, false, and ridiculous,' 9-204  
*says the dreamer.* 'What  
valid reasons did Xenophanes give  
in his audacious criticisms against these poets' 9-207  
portrayal of the Olympian  
deities in their poems?' 'Xenophanes  
asserted two compelling reasons: First, they 9-210

**Song 9: *Invention of Religions by Theocracies***

had portrayed the Greek gods  
and goddesses as if they were vile,  
ungodly, and immoral characters in rude  
farce-travesties. He asserted: 9-213

*“Homer and Hesiod attributed  
to the gods disreputable misdeeds  
which are to be punished  
when done by humans. And they told  
of the gods many shameful evil misdeeds:  
Stealing, adultery, and  
deception of each other.”* Do you  
think that he made wrong, false accusation 9-222

against Homer and Hesiod,  
Dante?’ ‘No. I admit that those  
poets told us ungodly misdeeds done 9-225

Song 9: *Invention of Religions by Theocracies*

by their gods. What is  
the next charge, put forward by him against  
these famous poets?' 'Xenophanes objected 9-228  
to their false depictions

of the sacred unseen *Deity*  
as if *IT* were like humans in their poems. 9-231

He wrote: "*But mortals suppose  
that the gods are also begotten  
as they are, and that the gods wear human 9-234  
clothing, and that the gods*

*have human speech and body. Yes, and  
if oxen and horses or lions had hands 9-237*

*and could paint with their hands  
and produce works of art as men do,  
then horses would paint the forms of their gods 9-240*

**Song 9: *Invention of Religions by Theocracies***

*like horses, and oxen like  
oxen, and make the body of their gods  
in their images according to their several* 9-243  
*kinds.” What do you think of  
the above incisive criticism  
by Xenophanes, Dante?’ asks the dreamer.* 9-246  
*But Dante keeps a silence,  
rapt in a profound contemplation.* 9-248



## **Song 10**

*Beholding God as a Simple Light*

**Song 10: *Beholding God as a Simple Light***

*Dante breaks his silence:*

‘Xenophanes’s arguments seem to be  
humorous, but I appreciate his perceptive  
and enlightening insight

10-3

on this profound matter. When he  
objected to such human-like traditional  
portrayals of the Greek

10-6

deities by Homer and Hesiod,  
did he propose a new way how they should  
be truly represented?’

10-9

‘The scanty surviving fragments of what  
Xenophanes wrote about it are quite cryptic,  
esoteric, and abstruse:

10-12

“GOD *is* ONE, *supreme among gods*  
*and men, and not like mortals in form or mind.*

10-15

**Song 10: Beholding God as a Simple Light**

*The whole sees, the whole perceives,  
the whole hears. Without efforts, ONE sets  
in motion all things by mind and thought. ONE* 10-18  
*always abides in the same place,  
without changing at all.” I surmise  
that Xenophanes called the mysterious,* 10-21  
*abstract, and impersonal  
ultimate Deity as “ONE,” but  
its true meaning is beyond my comprehension,’* 10-24  
*confesses the dreamer.*

‘I recognize that Xenophanes  
was a self-reflective and revolutionary 10-27  
philosopher. He looked deep  
into the true nature of *GOD/ONE*  
for himself as a sincere thinker rather 10-30

**Song 10: Beholding God as a Simple Light**

than as a pretentious  
prophet who claimed a divine  
revelation to mislead his religious cult. 10-33

Xenophanes's concept  
of the impersonal and abstract  
*GOD/ONE* has absolutely nothing to do 10-36  
with human affairs at all.

Hence, we cannot worship such *GOD/ONE*  
in any way that is possible for humans to do,' 10-39  
*says Dante in deep thoughts.*

'I concur with your insightful point.  
It seems to me of crucial importance 10-42

that Xenophanes did not  
pretend that somehow, he obtained  
a true knowledge of such an impersonal, 10-45

**Song 10: Beholding God as a Simple Light**

abstract, and ultimate *ONE*:  
He acknowledged that it would be  
impossible for any human being to attain 10-48  
a true understanding of *ONE*.  
He expounded the intrinsic limit  
of the ephemeral human's capability 10-51  
of knowing the true reality,  
as he wrote: "...and, of course, the clear  
and absolute truth no man has seen nor will 10-54  
there be any human who  
knows about GOD/ONE and what I say  
about such things. For even if, in the best case, 10-57  
one happens to speak just  
of what has been brought to pass, still  
he himself would not know the ultimate truth. 10-60

**Song 10: Beholding God as a Simple Light**

*...But honest opinion  
is allotted to humans. These things  
seem to me to resemble close to the reality.* 10-63

*As GOD/ONE does not reveal  
things clearly to mortals, men should  
find them out better by searching in the course  
of time.” I exalt that* 10-66

his sincere recognition of  
the inherent limitations of human’s 10-69

knowability is  
an enlightening profound wisdom.

Xenophanes devoted all his life to study 10-72

a wide range of objects  
in nature, and explained some  
superstitious or mythical things as plain 10-75

**Song 10: Beholding God as a Simple Light**

phenomena of nature;  
He repudiated inane divination  
of absurd magic. He had a deep faith in 10-78  
human's experiential  
inquiries of nature by attentive  
observations and keen logical thinking,' 10-81  
*says the dreamer with deep  
reverence. Suddenly Dante  
exclaims: 'It just dawned to me that the word 10-84  
GOD/ONE is a device,  
used to point to the mysterious  
ultimate, like we use a finger to point 10-87  
to the light of a distant  
star for someone to look into.'*  
'Yes, Dante! It reminds me of your sublime 10-90

**Song 10: Beholding God as a Simple Light**

Final Canto of *Paradiso*;  
How miraculously the poet-Dante  
blesses the pilgrim-Dante to behold God 10-93  
directly in person as  
a “***simple light***”: *GOD/ONE*, I think!  
Please sing for me such an exalting poetic 10-96  
transfiguration so that  
I may behold your breathtaking  
artistic apotheosis,’ *entreats the dreamer* 10-99  
*with ardent enthusiasm.*  
*Dante looks up heaven for blessed*  
*inspirations; the meek dreamer bows down* 10-102  
*to hear Dante recite*  
*his lofty sublime poem. In heartfelt*  
*sonorous voice, Dante begins to breathe out* 10-105



**Song 10: Beholding God as a Simple Light**

*the pious invocation*  
*of the pilgrim:* ““O supreme light  
that raises yourself so high above all mortals’ 10-108  
thought, restore in my mind  
a little bit of what you revealed  
to me of Yourself, and make my tongue cogent 10-111  
enough so that it may  
leave to the people of the future  
a fleeting glimpse of Your glory.”” *Rapt in* 10-114  
*trance with closed eyes, Dante*  
*muses as if he were gazing at*  
*the ultimate light in his inner vision.* 10-117  
*His noble spirit seems*  
*to ascend into an eternal*  
*and ethereal realm. In awe, wonder, and* 10-120

**Song 10: Beholding God as a Simple Light**

*thrills, the meek dreamer  
beholds his revered great poet's  
miraculous and mysterious transfiguration.* 10-123

“O abundant grace,” *resumes*  
*Dante his chanting*, “whence I should  
presume to fix my gaze on the eternal 10-126  
light so intently that  
my vision was consummated at last!  
In their depths, bound inherently by love 10-129  
into one volume,  
the universe revealed itself as  
the perfect whole of many diverse things; 10-132  
Substances and accidents  
and their various functions seemed  
to have merged in such a mysterious way 10-135

Song 10: *Beholding God as a Simple Light*

that I would speak of it  
as a *simple light*. The universal  
form of such a unity, I think, I saw, 10-138  
because the further I  
discerned it, the more I delighted  
in it. My mind attained its final wish 10-141  
to know, as if struck with  
the enlightening ray. Here ceased  
the power of my high fantasy. But 10-144  
at last, all my desires  
and my will revolved in harmonious  
motions by the Love that moves the sun 10-147  
and the other stars.”” *Thus*  
*breathes out Dante his recitation*  
*of the sublime finale of his Paradiso,* 10-150

**Song 10: Beholding God as a Simple Light**

*rapt in a trance.* ‘O, Dante!  
You see such an ultimate light  
as God into which all beings and their diverse      10-153  
beliefs converge; and ends  
of time become new beginnings!  
Please do not stop here your lofty fantasy:      10-156  
Keep on singing for us  
of the new life of Dante-pilgrim  
with his beloved Beatrice in Paradise;      12-159  
How did he bid a farewell  
to Beatrice when he had to depart  
from Paradise? What did Beatrice say to him?’      10-162  
*Thus the dreamer implores*  
*Dante to reveal what he left unsung*  
*in his Divine Comedy.* ‘How did you know      10-165

Song 10: *Beholding God as a Simple Light*

that I had withheld such  
affectionate private matters  
from my *Commedia*?' asks Dante in surprise. 10-168

'I did not know it; and yet  
somehow, deeply I felt something  
of pure, noble love is missing, when you 10-171

ended your *Divine Comedy*  
so abruptly. There should be, I hope,  
subtle and sublime expressions of graceful 10-174

Beatrice's deep true love for  
Dante-lover. I expected to hear  
the warm, angelic, loving voice of shy 10-177

beauteous Beatrice in  
noble humility, when she took on  
guiding Dante-pilgrim in your *Paradiso*. 10-180

**Song 10: Beholding God as a Simple Light**

But she seemed to have changed  
to an uncomfortable preacher of trite  
philosophies which eluded my wit and heart. 10-183

I wish to hear the gentle  
angelic voice of Beatrice when  
she bids her heartfelt farewell to Dante- 10-186

messenger departing from  
Paradise to come back to the Earth,'  
*says the dreamer with honest ardent passion.* 12-189

*Beaming warm subtle  
smiles, Dante-Poet recollects  
what he has left unsung from his Paradiso* 10-192

*about a moving farewell  
between Dante-messenger and  
his eternal beloved Beatrice in Paradise.* 10-195

## **Song 11**

*With Beatrice in the Paradise*

Song 11: *With Beatrice in the Paradise*

‘In that private chapter  
of my memory,’ says *Dante*  
*from his cherished recollection*, ‘there is 11-3  
a rubric, entitled  
“*With Beatrice in the Paradise.*”  
From that personal book, I will recite 11-6  
some scenes that may touch  
your heart.’ *Dante looks up heaven*  
*as if he invokes Beatrice to inspire him* 11-9  
*with her mysterious*  
*power of gracious, pure love; he begins*  
*to recite in an eloquent sonorous voice:* 11-12  
‘The pilgrim swoons in  
a deep trance, soon after he has  
directly beheld the brilliant divine light. 11-15



Song 11: *With Beatrice in the Paradise*

From her blessed seat, Beatrice  
notices that Dante falls and remains  
motionlessly prostrated on the ground. A sudden 11-18  
fear of his death rends  
her tender loving heart; she rushes  
down to the fallen pilgrim. “*Ah, Dante!* 11-21  
*My beloved Dante!*” cries  
Beatrice, “*why do you prostrate*  
*so motionless as if you had fallen in* 11-24  
*a deep sleep, never to be*  
*awakened to see the light again?*”  
But she hears no response from the fallen man. 11-27  
Weeping in anguish, she  
humbly kneels and prays: “*Merciful*  
*gracious Virgin Mother, please come down here* 11-30

Song 11: *With Beatrice in the Paradise*

*quickly and help us!”* Virgin  
Mary hears Beatrice’s urgent prayer;  
She comes down to Beatrice and says: “*Why did* 11-33  
*you call upon me in such*  
*anguish, dear child Beatrice?”* “*O Holy*  
*Mother, please give life back to this man, Dante:* 11-36  
*He was the devout and*  
*courageous pilgrim who had witnessed*  
*the punishments of sinners through the Hell,* 11-39  
*and had purged his sins*  
*in climbing up the steep Purgatory,*  
*passing through both the temporal and* 11-42  
*eternal fires,”* begs Beatrice.  
“*Yes, I know it. Do not fear, Beatrice.*  
*He is not dead but in a deep trance after* 11-45

**Song 11: *With Beatrice in the Paradise***

*he has beheld the very  
Divine Light himself, too overwhelming  
for any man to experience such a brilliance.* 11-48  
*Hold him gently in  
your warm bosom until he recovers  
his sense from his swoon, soon.” In exultant* 11-51  
*delight, Beatrice holds  
the insensible pilgrim and says:  
“How happy I am to learn that Dante will* 11-54  
*regain his good sense soon.  
Tell me, Holy Mother, what lot  
awaits this poet in the time yet to come.”* 11-57  
*“Dante shall return,” says  
Virgin Mary, “to the world of man.  
He will suffer terrible, cruel miseries,* 11-60

**Song 11: *With Beatrice in the Paradise***

*injustices and humiliations:*  
*Condemned to death by his native*  
*Florence, he will wander in dire exiles* 11-63  
*through tempestuous wild seas*  
*of being.” “O gracious Virgin Mother,*  
*I implore you with my heart and soul: Save* 11-66  
*Dante with your mercy!*  
*Please keep him here to serve you*  
*in Paradise with whatever talent he may* 11-69  
*be able to exert,”*  
entreats Beatrice in tears. “No,  
*Beatrice, it is not possible: Dante has* 11-72  
*sacred missions to fulfil*  
*in the world of man. He shall devote*  
*his life to sing of what he has seen through* 11-75

Song 11: *With Beatrice in the Paradise*

*his mysterious journeys*  
*into divine poems, overcoming*  
*dire woes and throes of agonies in the world* 11-78  
*of mankind. God will inspire*  
*and sustain him to accomplish*  
*his sacred tasks. When Dante recovers his sense,* 11-81  
*remind him of what I*  
*have revealed to you.” Thus spoke,*  
Saint Mary leaves. Soon, the pilgrim awakes from 11-84  
his deep trance; he opens  
his eyes and gazes into the eyes  
of Beatrice in rapture: “*O, Lady of my love,* 11-87  
*Beatrice! In your beauteous*  
*eyes, I see splendours of the whole*  
*Paradise! Is this real that I behold you,* 11-90

**Song 11: *With Beatrice in the Paradise***

*embraced in your bosom,  
or is this just in a fanciful dream  
to fleet away?"* says the awakened pilgrim 11-93  
in a gentle voice of sheer  
exultation. "*O Dante, my beloved,  
you have come back to life!"* exclaims Beatrice 11-96  
in a bliss, "*in your gentle  
wise voice, my divine poet, I hear  
the heavenly music of pure love! It is* 11-99  
*real, indeed, that I am  
holding you in my bosom; here  
I found you lying motionless as if dead.* 11-102  
*I invoked the Virgin Mother  
to come and revive you. She came  
here and assured me that you were not dead* 11-105

**Song 11: *With Beatrice in the Paradise***

*but just fell in a trance  
after you had beheld the pure  
divine light that is too overwhelming* 11-108  
*for any living man  
to experience such a brilliance.*  
*She bade me to hold you in my bosom* 11-111  
*to warm your body so that  
you will get back your sense from a deep  
swoon soon,” says Beatrice, blushing in tender* 11-114  
*modesty. “I recall  
that numinous, ineffable,  
and exalted experience of gazing at* 11-117  
*the very Divine Light  
in Itself, at last!” says the elated  
pilgrim. “I wish to hear, my divine poet,”* 11-120

Song 11: *With Beatrice in the Paradise*

says Beatrice beaming tender  
smiles, “*your numinous experiences.*”  
“*May your gracious love inspire me to sing,*” 11-123  
says the delighted pilgrim,  
“*of the mysterious experience: as you*  
*wished, Saint Bernard prayed to the Virgin Mary* 11-126  
*for her intercession*  
*so that I may behold Divine Light:*  
““Virgin Mother, daughter of your divine Son, 11-129  
humbler and loftier  
than any being ever created,  
the fixed terminal of an eternal counsel, 11-132  
you are she who ennobled  
human nature such that the Maker  
did not disdain to be one of His makings. 11-135



**Song 11: *With Beatrice in the Paradise***

In your womb, the love was  
reborn, whose warmth in eternal  
peace made this flower germinate to bloom. 11-138

For us, you are the bright  
noon of charity; for humans in  
mortal plights on earth, you are the ever 11-141

living fountains of their hopes.  
Lady, so great you are and so mighty  
your power, anyone who looks for grace without 11-144  
seeking your gracious

blessing is as futile as trying  
to fly without a wing. Not only your benevolences 11-147

flow out free when we beg;  
Often you send them to us even  
before we pray to you. In you, is mercy; 11-150

Song 11: *With Beatrice in the Paradise*

In you, is piety;  
In you, magnificence; in you, is  
the total of goodness in all creatures. 11-153  
This man who has witnessed,  
journeying from the deepest pit  
of the universe up to this height, the lives 11-156  
of soul each one by one,  
now supplicates to you that, by grace,  
you may grant him such supernal power 11-159  
so that he may lift his eyes  
the higher towards the ultimate  
salutation. And I, who never burned 11-162  
in such a zeal for my sight,  
hope that my entreaty suffices for  
his pious wish, that by your merciful 11-165

Song 11: *With Beatrice in the Paradise*

prayers, you clean his sight  
of all clouding that impairs mortals  
so that the highest bliss may reveal in 11-168  
Himself to him. Also, I  
pray you, Queen, who can do whatever  
you will, that keep his mind sane after what 11-171  
he has seen. Protect him  
from falling into human impulses.  
See Beatrice who, with many other blessed, folds 11-174  
her hands to implore you  
to grant what I have entreated you.”  
*Thus concluded Saint Bernard his eloquent 11-177*  
*and deeply moving prayer*  
*by mentioning your name, Beatrice,”*  
says the pilgrim rapt a heartfelt elation. 11-180

## **Song 12**

*Farewell between Beatrice and Dante*

Song 12: Farewell between Beatrice and Dante

“*“Saint Bernard’s moving prayer,”*  
says Beatrice in a warm, tender voice,  
*“shall ever resound deep in my heart. How* 12-3  
*did you realize, Dante,*  
*that your ultimate wish was fulfilled?”*  
*“Suddenly, I felt that,”* says the pilgrim, 12-6  
*“my sight became clearer*  
*and purer, piercing deeply into*  
*that exalted light wherein the truth inheres.”* 12-9  
*“What image of the truth,”*  
asks Beatrice, *“did you see in that*  
*divine light?”* *“It was such an overwhelming* 12-12  
*and breathtaking experience,”*  
says the pilgrim, *“hardly can I*  
*express it adequately in human language!* 12-15

**Song 12: Farewell between Beatrice and Dante**

*As one who sees a vision  
in a dream, the passion so impressed  
lingers after the dream, although nothing else* 12-18  
*remains in his awake mind,  
so, I feel since the sight has been lost.  
And yet, in the depth of my heart, I know* 12-21  
*the sweet distilling which  
the sublime experience still imparts.  
Bedazzled and enthralled, my mind holds its* 12-24  
*gaze firmly fixed at the light  
in wonder, immobile, and intent.  
Yet, my wish to see it kindles evermore;* 12-27  
*That light transforms its beholder  
such that he will never consent  
to move his glance to another sight or thought,* 12-30

**Song 12: Farewell between Beatrice and Dante**

*because everything my will  
has ever sought is gathered there,  
and every quest is made perfect there,* 12-33  
*as anything which is apart  
from it is defective. See, Beatrice,  
that what I have tried to recall is less than* 12-36  
*what a baby babbles  
who suckles milk from his mother's breast."*  
*"I am utterly fascinated," says Beatrice,* 12-39  
*beaming warm tender smiles,  
"by what you have sung in such a lofty  
tone, although I cannot grasp everything in it.* 12-42  
*Please keep on singing of  
your exalted vision of Divine Light!"*  
The pilgrim tries to express the ineffable: 12-45

**Song 12: Farewell between Beatrice and Dante**

*“As I was gazing into  
the living light, I saw a single  
visage, for it always is as it ever was.*

12-48

*But as my sight learnt how  
to see by seeing the living light,  
its appearance seems to transform itself  
into a new figure:*

12-51

*Within the profound clear substance  
of the exalted Light, three circles appeared  
to me; they showed three  
distinct colours, occupying one space.*

12-54

*The first mirrored the next as if it were  
rainbow begetting rainbow,  
and the third, a flame that breathed  
forth equally from the first pair of rainbows.*

12-57

12-60



**Song 12: Farewell between Beatrice and Dante**

*Ah, how feeble language is,  
and how unfit to frame my thoughts!  
What was shown to me is beyond our speech.* 12-63

*O, eternal light that  
dwells within Yourself alone, who alone  
knows Yourself and is known only by Yourself!* 12-66

*You smile on Yourself in love,  
intimately knowing and so known.  
That circle which seems to me like a reflected  
radiance in You, looks  
like the image of a man; thus  
I keep on gazing at it intensely.* 12-72

*As a geometer tries  
to figure out how to fit a square  
into a circle in vain, so do I stare* 12-75

**Song 12: Farewell between Beatrice and Dante**

*at this wondrous strange sight,  
striving to make the image fit  
to the sphere, and how they may hold together.* 12-78

*But my own wings can not  
carry me there; and yet the truth  
I long for dawns in me, awakening my mind* 12-81  
*like a brilliant lightning.”*

*“Ah, hold your breath, my beloved Dante!”  
cries Beatrice turning pale with fears, “too much* 12-84  
*of the trite theology*

*and vain philosophy, I am afraid,  
have confused and disturbed your mind; what I* 12-87  
*see in the divine light*

*is pure love—simple, humble, and yet  
most noble!”* At this moment Saint Augustine 12-90

**Song 12: Farewell between Beatrice and Dante**

comes; he says in a solemn  
voice: *“The time has come for you,  
Dante, to return to the world of man:* 12-93  
*You have the holy task  
to sing of what you have been granted  
to witness through your numinous pilgrimage* 12-96  
*into divine poems.*  
*You must overcome human impulses  
of pride, greed, and lust, bearing dire miseries* 12-99  
*and agonies to sing for  
the suffering humans drown deep  
in the sea of sins. Here, gentle Beatrice* 12-102  
*with many blessed souls will pray  
that God will inspire and sustain you  
to accomplish your lofty and sacred mission.* 12-105

**Song 12: Farewell between Beatrice and Dante**

*I shall be your friendly  
companion who will lead you safely  
back to the world of man on earth.” “Thank you, 12-108  
holy father, for your kind  
guidance. I wish to entreat you  
for your gracious favour,” says the meek pilgrim. 12-111  
“What is your wish?” asks he.  
“I wish to visit my revered  
fatherly master, Virgil, in the Limbo 12-114  
on our way. Moved by the plea  
of Beatrice, he rescued me, haplessly  
astray in the awful dark woods; Virgil toiled 12-117  
to protect me from dire  
perils in climbing down to the depth  
of the Hell, and then climbing up sheer cliffs 12-120*

**Song 12: Farewell between Beatrice and Dante**

*of the Purgatory. When  
we finally reached its summit,  
however, Virgil suddenly disappeared.* 12-123

*I wish to see my dear  
master, Virgil, again and share with him  
what I have witnessed through this numinous  
pilgrimage, and beseech  
him for his wise advice on how  
to put it into an honest poem,” pleads* 12-126

*the devout pilgrim.* 12-129

*“Certainly, I will try to do  
my best to find Virgil in the Limbo,  
although I have never  
visited the realm of wise heathens.* 12-132

*I also wish to meet with my revered poet,* 12-135

**Song 12: Farewell between Beatrice and Dante**

*Virgil, and many other  
sages in the mysterious Limbo,”*  
says Saint Augustine with genuine enthusiasm. 12-138

The pilgrim turns his gaze  
to meet the beautiful eyes of  
his beloved Beatrice, in which he sees the whole 12-141

Paradise aglow in splendours.  
*“My beauteous lady of love, Beatrice!”*  
exalts the meek pilgrim, “*your gracious love* 12-144  
*has saved my soul from sins*  
*and sustained me in my hard mystic*  
*pilgrimage through the Hell, the Purgatory,* 12-147  
*and the Paradise at last.*

*Preserve in me your love’s magnificence*  
*so that I may sing of you deep from my soul.”* 12-150

Song 12: Farewell between Beatrice and Dante

*“Dante, my beloved Dante!”*  
says Beatrice her eyes sparkling  
with warm tears, *“sing of what you have seen* 12-153  
*in your pilgrimage for*  
*all ages to come; may it ennoble*  
*human nature and bless humble, honest,* 12-156  
*good people with pure love.”*  
*“A true poem of you shall I write,”*  
says the pilgrim, *“deep from my earnest heart;* 12-159  
*May God inspire me with*  
*His will and grace and protect me*  
*to fulfil my sacred vow.” “I am a meek,* 12-162  
*simple woman who does not*  
*deserve such an honour; yet I*  
*entreat you, Dante, my beloved poet,* 12-165

**Song 12: Farewell between Beatrice and Dante**

*whatever you sing of,  
please write it, not in Greek or Latin,  
but in our native tongue—plain sweet Italian—* 12-168  
*so that I can read them  
and sing to myself to soothe this meek  
longing heart,”* says Beatrice smiling in tears.’ 12-171  
*Here finishes Dante  
his reminiscing about the chapter:*  
*“With Beatrice in the Paradise” in his inner* 12-174  
*book of memories. He notices  
that the dreamer sobs heartbrokenly.*  
*‘Why do you shed warm tears?’ asks the poet.* 12-177  
*‘The story of your noble  
love moves me deep to weep,’ says the man.*  
*‘Although I have never experienced myself such* 12-180



**Song 12: Farewell between Beatrice and Dante**

a noble, sublime love  
in my paltry life, somehow, I feel  
as if you, Dante-poet, have blessed me 12-183  
to feel like a Dante-  
lover and his beloved Beatrice,  
transfigured into an earnest one-being 12-186  
in your lofty *Paradiso!*  
*The wise poet speaks in a gentle*  
*fatherly voice:* ‘Your warm compassionate 12-189  
humanism touches me deep,  
my dear dreamer. This is a blessed  
moment of our inner awakening, in which 12-192  
different opinions  
transcend into a blissful harmony.  
From our conversation in this strange encounter, 12-195

Song 12: Farewell between Beatrice and Dante

I gather that you must have been striving for a long time to write something of vital importance into earnest poems.'	12-198
'Yes, my revered poet Dante! I confess that it is my wishful dream to write about what I have experienced and learned on nature, in the mode of your sublime artistry of <i>La Commedia</i> rather than the didactic style of <i>De Rerum</i> <i>Natura</i> of Lucretius. I beseech you to guide me how to fulfil my dream,' <i>implores the dreamer.</i>	12-201 12-204 12-207
'I am very much interested in hearing what	12-210

**Song 12: Farewell between Beatrice and Dante**

you dream to write about,’  
*says Dante with genuine curiosity.*

‘I hope to write on the nature of life: 12-213

Despite their intricate  
and complex diversities, all living  
things share their common characteristic 12-216  
features. Every organism  
obeys to its immanent principles  
that determine how it should carry out 12-219  
challenging tasks for  
its survival and prosperity.

Simple primordial forms of life emerged 12-222  
from non-living materials  
on the early Earth about four billion  
years ago. Gradually, the primitive life 12-225

**Song 12: Farewell between Beatrice and Dante**

evolved to become more  
complex and advanced in its structure  
and function. Humankind is the most recent 12-228  
product, *called Homo sapience*,  
by the natural continuous processes  
of the long journey of all living organisms, 12-231  
known as *the evolution*  
*of life, 'says the elated dreamer.*  
'Do you wish to expound in your poem 12-234  
that it is not God who  
created life in the beginning  
but life emerged by itself?' *asks Dante.* 12-237  
'Yes. Firmly, I believe  
that it is the imaginative human  
brains that have invented their unknowable 12-240

**Song 12: Farewell between Beatrice and Dante**

and fantastic *deities*  
by the use of their miraculous and  
unique mental tool: language,' says *the dreamer*: 12-243

To be continued in:

***Journey of Life on Earth:***  
***Conversing with Dante in Dream {2}***



## Epilogue

[A] The conversations between the character, '*Dante*' and the character '*dreamer*' in this work are mere fictional imaginations. Yet, the author has tried them to be based on the relevant classical texts in English translations to the best of his ability as much as they may be workable with the following references:

(A-1). *La Divina Commedia* of Dante Alighieri.  
Edited and annotated by Grandgent, C.H., Revised by  
Singleton, C. S. (1972), Harvard University Press.  
*The Divine Comedy* of Dante. Translated by Singleton,  
C. S. (1970-80), Princeton University Press.  
*The Divine Comedy* of Dante. Translated by Bickersteth,  
G. L. (1981), Basil Blackwell, Oxford.  
*The Divine Comedy* of Dante. Translated by White, L. G.  
(1948), Pantheon Books, New York.  
*The Comedy of Dante Alighieri* (1962), Translated by  
Sayers, D. L. and Reynolds, B., Penguin Books.

(A-2). *La Vita Nuova (The New Life)* of Dante.  
Translated by Rossetti, D. G.: Reprinted in *The Portable  
Dante*, edited by P. Milano (1969). Penguin Books.

(A-3) *The Aeneid of Virgil*: translated by Fairclough, H.R.  
(1935), Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press;  
*The Aeneid of Virgil*: translated by Fitzgerald, R. (1981),  
Vintage Classics.

(A-4). *De Rerum Natura (On the Nature of Things)* of Lucretius. Translated by Rouse, W. H. D. Revised by Smith, M. F. (1982). Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press.

(A-5). *The Republic of Plato*. Translated by Shorey, P. (1937), Loeb Classical Library, Harvard Univ. Press.  
*The Republic of Plato*. Translated by Allen, R. E. (2006), Yale University Press.

(A-6). *The Iliad of Homer*. Translated by Murray, A. (1924), Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press.  
*The Iliad of Homer*. Translated by Lattimore, R. (1951), University of Chicago Press.  
*The Iliad of Homer*. Translated by Fagles, R. (1990), Penguin Books.

(A-7). *The Odyssey of Homer*. Translated by Murray, A. (1919), Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press.  
*The Odyssey of Homer*. Translated by Fitzgerald, R. (1961), Doubleday & Company.  
*The Odyssey of Homer*. Translated by Fagles, R. (1996), Penguin Books.

(A-8). *Hesiod, The Homeric Hymns and Homeric*. Translated by Evelyn-White, H. G. (1914), Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press.



(A-9). *Xenophanes of Colophon: Fragments*.  
A text and translation with commentary by Lesher, J. H.  
(1992). University of Toronto Press.

[B]. The relevance between the present fictional narrative and the above references may be summarized as follows:

(B-1). The encounter between character dreamer and character Dante in **Song 1** was based on Canto 1 of *Inferno* of *The Divine Comedy* of Dante, cited in (A-1).

(B-2). The character Dante's narration of his love of Beatrice to the character dreamer in **Song 2** was based on *La Vita Nuova (The New Life)* of Dante in the reference, cited in (A-2).

(B-3). The encounter between pilgrim-Dante and Virgil in **Song 3** was based on Canto 2 of *Inferno* of the *Divine Comedy* (A-1).

(B-4). Dante's recitation from the Book Six of *The Aeneid of Vergil* to the dreamer in **Song 4** was based on the references cited in (A-3).

(B-5). The dreamer's comments on *De Rerum Natura* (*On the Nature of Things*) of Lucretius in **Song 5** was based on the reference, cited in (A-4).

(B-6). Dante's recitation of *The Myth of Er* from Book Ten of *The Republic* of Plato in **Song 6** was based on the references in (A-5).

(B-7). The dreamer's paraphrasing of the *Divine Comedy of Dante* into '*The Epic of Astral Messenger Er-Dante*' in **Song 7** was based on references in (A-1).

(B-8). The episode of the Limbo in **Song 8** was based on Cantos 3 and 4 of the *Inferno* in (A-1).

(B-9). In **Song 9**, the discussions on Homer's portrayal of the Olympian deities were based on references in (A-6) and (A-7). The comments on the Hesiod's *The Theogony* was based on the reference in (A-8). The discussions on Xenophanes's criticisms of the misrepresentations of the traditional Greek deities by Homer and Hesiod were based on the reference, cited in (A-9).

(B-10). Dante's recitation of the numinous experience of beholding God directly in person as 'a simple light' in **Song 10** was based on the final verses of Canto 33 of *Paradiso* of *The Divine Comedy of Dante* in (A-1).

- [C] The present fictional narrative presents the private and affectionate episodes between Beatrice and Dante in the paradise: **Song 11: *With Beatrice in Paradise***, and **Song 12: *Farewell between Beatrice and Dante***. They are merely fictional inventions, made up by the author who imagined that Dante had left them unsung in his *Divine Comedy*.
- [D] The present work is written in the syllabic tercet stanza: the first line has six syllables; the second line, eight; the third, ten syllables.  
This is not a traditional English poem with the proper accentual prosody. Nevertheless, this strange syllabic writing is what its author could try best in his pidgin English to sing of the lofty ideas and sublime spirit of his revered classical poets who have inspired and nurtured him.
- [E] The author wishes to acknowledge and appreciate deep inspirations and soul-searching influences by *The Divine Comedy* of Dante (1265 – 1321).  
The terza rima of *La Commedia* has inspired him to adapt a simpler form of the tercet stanzas in his humble works.

The sublime spirituality, the beauty of the exquisite poetic form, and the deeply moving music of *La Commedia* of Dante are high above far beyond his reach; yet, they inspire him like the mysterious spiritual stars shining in his inner heaven.

- [F] The book-cover-photograph of the mysterious dawn, which embraces the serene sea, was taken in Nova Scotia, Canada, by the author.

Art Aeon



